KHAIRUDIN ALJUNIED

ISLAM *in* MALAYSIA

an entwined history





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Islam in Malaysia

An Entwined History

KHAIRUDIN ALJUNIED

Georgetown University
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Abbreviations

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Malaysia
ADIL	Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial
API	Angkatan Pemuda Insaf
ASNB	Amanah Saham Nasional Berhad
ASWAJA	Pertubuhan Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah Malaysia
AWAS	Angkatan Wanita Sedar
BA	Barisan Alternatif
BARJASA	Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak
BATAS	Barisan Tani SeMalaya
BIMB	Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad
BKM	Barisan Kebangsaan Melayu
BMA	British Military Administration
BN	Barisan Nasional
BPS	Barisan Pemuda Sarawak
CPIRUHAA	Committee for the Promotion of Inter-Religious Understanding and Harmony Among Adherents
DAP	Democratic Action Party
FMS	Federated Malay States
GAGASAN	Gagasan Demokrasi Rakyat
GEPIMA	Malaysian Indian Muslim Youth Movement
GERAK	Gerakan Keadilan Rakyat Malaysia
GERAM	Gerakan Angkatan Muda
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIKMAH	Harakah Islamiah
HM	Hizbul Muslimin
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
ICA	Industrial Co-ordination Act
IAIS	International Institute of Advanced Studies
IIFSO	International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought

IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
INDAH	The Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam
IOK	Islamization of Knowledge
IRF	Islamic Renaissance Front
IRC	Islamic Representative Council
ISMA	Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia
ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
JAWI	Jabatan Agama Wilayah Persekutuan
JIM	Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia
JKSM	Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia
KJM	Khairat Jumaat Muslimin
KMM	Kesatuan Melayu Muda
KMS	Kesatuan Melayu Singapura
KRIS	Kekuatan Rakyat Istimewa
LEPIR	Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat
LKPI	Lembaga Kebajikan Perempuan Islam
LUTH	Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji
MACMA	Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association
MAPEN	Majlis Perundingan Negara
MATA	Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MEC	Malay Education Council
MIC	Malayan Indian Congress
MIG	Medical Interest Group
MNC	Multinational companies
MPAJA	Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army
MPM	Majlis Pelajaran Melayu
MSM	Majlis Syura Muslimun
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NOC	National Operations Council
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OWC	Obedient Wives Club
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PANAS	Parti Negara Sarawak
PAP	People's Action Party
PAPAS or PESAKA	Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak
PAS	Parti Islam Semalaysia

PASPAM	Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena Malaya
PBB	Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu
Pemenang	Persatuan Melayu Pulau Pinang
PERAM	Pemuda Radikal Melayu
PERKASA	Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa
PERPEMAS	Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se-Malaya
PERKIM	Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia
PETA	Pembela Tanahair
PH	Pakatan Harapan
PIM	Persatuan Ikhwan Muslimin
PIP	Persatuan Islam Putatan
PIS	Persatuan Islam Sabah
PIT	Persatuan Islam Tawau
PKM	Parti Komunis Malaya
PKMM	Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya
PKPIM	Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat
PMIP	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
PMSP	Persatuan Melayu Seberang Perai
PNB	Permodalan Nasional Berhad
PPBM	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia
PPI	Pusat Penyelidikan Islam
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PR	Pakatan Rakyat
PRB	Parti Rakyat Brunei
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaya
PUTERA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat
PUTERA-AMCJA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat–All-Malaya Council of Joint Action
SAN	Sekolah Agama Negeri
SANAP	Sabah National Party
SAR	Sekolah Agama Sakyat
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
SIS	Sisters in Islam
SS	Straits Settlements
SUPP	Sarawak United Peoples' Party
UMNO	United Malays Nationalist Organisation
UMS	Unfederated Malay States
UNKO	United National Kadazan Organization
USIA	United Sabah Islamic Association
USNO	United Sabah National Organization

UCSTA	United Chinese School Teachers' Association
WADAH	Wadah Pencerdasan Umat
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
YADIM	Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia
YMU	Young Muslim Union
YPB	Yayasan Pelaburan Bumiputera

Glossary

adat customs
akal reason
asabiyyah group feeling
bai'ah loyalty
bangsa race
bid'ah innovations
da'wah Muslim missionary activity
datus noblemen
derhaka treason
dhimmis non-Muslim minorities
Eidul Fitri celebration of the conclusion of the fasting month
fatwa religious edict
fiqh jurisprudence
hadith Prophetic sayings
hajj pilgrimage to Makkah
halal permissible
halaqah study circles
haram impermissible
hijab Muslim headscarf
hudud Islamic criminal law
ijtihad independent reasoning
imam prayer leaders
islah renewing and reforming
jihad struggle
jizya poll tax
kafir unbelievers
khalwat close proximity between unmarried couples suspected of engaging in immoral acts

kerajaan Malay kingdoms
keramat miracles
khurafat animistic superstition
khutbahs sermons
madrasahs Islamic schools
maharaja great ruler
mandalas circle of kings
markaz center
maulid celebration of the birthday of the Prophet
muftis expounder of Islamic laws
murshid spiritual guide
nama titles
niqab face veils
penghulu village chief
perang sabil holy war
pondok village boarding school
qadi judge
qaris persons who recite the Qur'an
rajas kings
shahid martyr
shari'a Islamic ethical and religious code
shuyukh eminent scholars
Sunnah Prophetic tradition
surau prayer houses
syahbandar harbormaster
syair rhythmic four-line stanzas
rakyat masses
ta'awun mutual assistance
tajdid renewal
tariqahs Sufi brotherhoods
taqdir fate
taqlid blind imitation
tarbiyyah education
titah commands
ukhuwwah brotherhood
ulama scholars
ummah global Muslim community
usrah family
wali saints
waqf Muslim endowment
warath al-anbiya' inheritors of the Prophet
wasatiyyah moderation

zakat Islamic tithe
zikr remembrance of God
zillullah fil-alam God's shadow in the world
zina adultery

Introduction

IN LATE APRIL 2014, Barack Obama made a historic diplomatic trip to Malaysia, marking the first time in fifty years since an American president last visited what is regarded by Muslims globally as a leading Islamic country.[1] That Obama was the first African American president whose Arabic middle name is Hussein added to the euphoria among many Malaysian Muslims about his two-day stay in a country the president knew well as a child growing up in neighboring Indonesia. Obama's visit was significant in other ways. He spent time touring and paying tribute to one of the largest Muslim sacred sites in Kuala Lumpur, the *Masjid Negara* (National Mosque; Figure I.1). "There can be no better way for Obama to honour Islam than by visiting Masjid Negara," said the religious adviser to the prime minister, Tan Sri Dr Abdullah Md Zin. "It will be interesting to know what he has to say about the mosque and Islam."[2]

Obama was indeed visibly impressed with the stunning architecture and splendor of the mosque, which, to him, reflected the cosmopolitan outlook of Islam in Malaysia. But he had something equally pertinent to say about the Muslim-dominated nation. During a town hall meeting with youth activists on the same day, Obama addressed what he felt was Malaysia's enduring strength and greatest challenge that mirrored the ongoing struggles in his home country: relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

> Here in Malaysia, this is a majority Muslim country. But then, there are times where those who are non-Muslims find themselves perhaps being disadvantaged or experiencing hostility. In the United States, obviously historically the biggest conflicts arose around race. And we had to fight a civil war and we had to have a civil rights movement over the course of generations until I could stand before you as a President of African descent. But of course, the job is not done. There is still discrimination and prejudice and ethnic conflict inside the United States that we have to be vigilant against.



FIGURE 1.1 Masjid Negara, Kuala Lumpur

> So my point is all of us have within us biases and prejudices of people who are not like us or were not raised in the same faith or come from a different ethnic background. But the world is shrinking. It's getting smaller. You could think that way when we were all living separately in villages and tribes, and we didn't have contact with each other. We now have the Internet and smart phones, and our cultures are all colliding. The world has gotten smaller and no country is going to succeed if part of its population is put on the sidelines because they're discriminated against. Malaysia won't succeed if non-Muslims don't have opportunity.[3]

Obama's frank assessment of the multi-religious landscape in Malaysia left many Malaysians jittery. I was equally fascinated by his remarks. Given the long hiatus since an American president last visited Malaysia, one would expect Obama to exercise some diplomatic tact, even if he had meant it to be purely gestural. It was not long before Obama's comments sparked a heated Internet debate about the state and future of Malaysia. The president raised many delicate issues, providing the inspiration for this book. Was he right about non-Muslims feeling left out in a country known for its unique diversity and inclusivity?[4] Is Malaysia's global connectedness a recent phenomenon? Or has it been that way much longer than Obama imagined it to be?

In search of the answers to these and many other questions, I seek to tell the story, or, should I say, the biography of Islam in Malaysia. It is a story that goes far back in time to almost a millennium ago. It is a story about contacts and connections, relations and exchanges, that both confirm and yet depart from Obama's take on Islam and Muslims there. It is also a story that offers a new methodological approach and a fresh look at Islam in Malaysia, how it was infused gradually in a space that was originally under the sway of non-Muslims and how it became what it is today. The story of Islam in Malaysia, to my mind, has been partially told and narrated in patches, falling short of providing us with a complete portrait of the enduring fates and fortunes of Muslims in that part of the world. This book initiates a movement toward a much richer perspective about an equally important group of Muslims located far away from the House of Islam that has been shaping the expanding *ummah* (global Muslim community).

To be sure, historical writings on Islam and Muslims in Malaysia have developed rapidly in the last century.[5] Although extensive, the canvass of works writ large can be generally divided into a few recurrent themes. The first and perhaps most prevalent theme pertains to developments in political and radical Islam, now popularly termed "Islamism." Scholars working in this area track the growth of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia that began in earnest in the 1970s. The literature on political and radical Islam has developed tremendously in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the United States and in the midst of persistent threats posed by extremists. One major line of argument discernible from such a strand of scholarship is that Islam in Malaysia was more inclusive and embracing prior to the advent of revivalist pulses from South Asia and the Middle East. The donning of the *hijab* (Muslim headscarf), the establishment of Islamically compliant institutions, the growth of assertive Islamic movements, and calls for the establishment of *hudud* (Islamic criminal law) and the *shari'a* (Islamic ethical and religious code), as these scholars have it, are indications that Muslims in Malaysia set on the path of conservatism and conflict with non-Muslims.[6]

The second thread of scholarship covers the social, devotional, educational, and economic dimensions of the history of Islam in Malaysia. Included in such works are questions relating to rituals, customs, traditions, festivals, and ceremonies that characterized Islam, in addition to studies on the functions and fates of Islamic schools, mosques, and other religious institutions. These writings examine various transformations and adaptations that Muslims in Malaysia underwent in meeting the demands of colonialism, modernity, and globalization.[7]

To be added to this are academic writings that center around the study of intellectual and scholarly currents in Malaysia. The *ulama* (Muslim scholars),

reformers, intellectuals, and opinion makers and their ideas about Islam as it was manifested and promoted in Malaysia are placed in sharp relief. Historians of Malaysia have spent much ink explaining how and when Islam first arrived in Malaysia, on the impact of the faith in society, as well as on the persistence of traditionalism and its interactions and conflicts with the forces of reformism and modernism.[8]

These seemingly divergent research paradigms share some similar features. They deal with short time spans, covering the *kerajaan* (kingship), colonial, and/or postcolonial eras. No work has yet to surpass the limitations of time to provide a seamless account of the millennium-old venture of Islam in Malaysia within the confines of a single study. Furthermore, much of the existing corpus of works pays inordinate attention to developments within Malaysia and less to how Islam in that geopolitical terrain interacted with many developments from without. Such "methodological nationalism," where the nation-state is used as defining units and fixed perimeters, has blinkered scholars of the regional and, more importantly, global developments that have shaped Islam in Malaysia since the eleventh century.[9] Perhaps more crucially, the many historical works on Islam in Malaysia that have come down to us are generally Muslim-centric. Very little coverage has been given to the part of non-Muslims in the shaping of social lives and piety of Muslims and how they were also shaped by the waves of Islamization that flowed into Malaysia.

While benefiting from the insights and extending the limits of previous scholarship, this book seeks to bring the analysis of Islam in Malaysia to a different direction, which I hope will have implications for the study of the history of Muslims globally. I argue that Islam has maintained its presence in Malaysia for over a thousand years and that this long and intriguing past can be best approached through what I term "entwined history." As the French intellectual Fernand Braudel reminded us: "if one wants to understand the world, one has to determine the hierarchy of forces, currents, and individual movements, and then put them together to form an overall constellation. Throughout, one must distinguish between long-term movements and momentary pressures, finding the immediate sources of the latter and the long-term thrust of the former."[10] In the same vein, I argue that if one wants to fully unravel the millennium-old venture of Islam in Malaysia through the lenses of entwined history, one has to consider the long-term interrelationships, interplay, connections, exchanges, and nexus between four key forces of history: global currents and local appropriations, the conduct of states and the everyday agency of Muslims in society, scholarly and popular pieties, and, more importantly, the roles of Muslims and non-Muslims.

Global Currents and Local Appropriations

Malaysia was globalized even before the idea of globalization gained the currency it has today. Buddhist and Hindu kingdoms established religious, political, and economic networks that stretched as far as Europe even before Islam became a world-conquering force. These kingdoms were plugged into interregional trading systems since the first century AD. Such links were expanded when Islamic sultanates dominated Malaysia, right through the transition from colonial and subsequently postcolonial eras. If West African Islam was formed out of the exchanges between three main civilizations[11], Islam in Malaysia is a byproduct of five: the Arabian, Indian, Persian, Chinese, and European civilizations. It was and still is linked to the ummah and has always been a constituent and contributive part of the Islamic world system.[12]

The approach of entwined history acknowledges this global connectedness and its civilization influences. It calls for a deep sensitivity toward how global currents shaped local realities and how locals have appropriated and fashioned global influences to meet their needs and demands. It demands an attentiveness to the movement of ideas, peoples, goods, technologies, arts, and cultures across oceans, seas, and air into and from Malaysia, and how these forces interacted and molded the lives of Muslims and non-Muslims in local societies. Islam, for that matter, originated from the Arab world, traversing across lands and oceans in Asia, Europe, and Africa to its eventual infusion into Malaysia because of the continued interactions between Muslims globally with the diverse population in that country. Such global–local exchanges began as early as the eighth century, sustained by trade and the activities of Sufi as well as Arab, Indian, Persian, and Chinese scholars and missionaries. Their quests lived through the ebb and flow of Muslim and European empires and have taken on new forms in the present moment with the global Islamic resurgence and the digital age.[13]

The *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) ensured that the "Muslim Web," to tweak the term used by John and William McNeill, endured the vicissitudes of time.[14] An interesting anecdote to illustrate this global–local connection is the Muslim uprising against the British in the Malay state of Terengganu on May 21, 1928. Malay-Muslim rebels carried the Ottoman red flag, the *Bendera Stambul* (Istanbul Flag), as a symbol of their allegiance to the Ottoman empire. This was one among the many uprisings during the age of Pan-Islamism where Ottoman symbolism was used to fan anti-colonial passions.[15] In 1979, the onset of the Iranian Revolution and Islamic revivalism in Egypt inspired the creation of Muslim movements such as the Angkatan Belia Malaysia (ABIM), Darul Arqam, and the spread of the Indian-based Tablighi Jamaat (or Jemaah Tabligh) in Malaysia. Led by, Anwar

Ibrahim (the prime minister-in-waiting), the ABIM adopted a comprehensive program of action to reform the Malaysian state and society to become in line with Islamic norms and way of life.[16]

The words of Marshall Hodgson are most instructive in cementing the point about global–local connections further:

> In a "history of mankind," Islamic civilization should be studied not only in the several regions where it flourished, but also as a historical whole, as a major element in forming the destiny of all mankind. The vast Islamic society certainly has been this. Not only in the first centuries, but also in the later periods the fate of Islam is of world-wide import.[17]

The Malaysian-Islamic civilization should thus be examined against the backdrop of the global situation because it forms the historical whole Hodgson was referring to. A leading scholar of Islam in Southeast Asia, Osman Bakar, has identified three waves of globalization of which Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia were active participants. He describes these three waves as "Muslim-dominated globalization" (eleventh to sixteenth centuries), "Western-dominated globalization" (sixteenth century to the Second World War), and "American-dominated globalization" (Second World War to the present). The third wave of globalization saw the importation of American Muslim scholarly ideas into Malaysia. Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988), Ismail Al-Faruqi (1921–1986), Fathi Osman (1928–2010), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933–), to name a few, were the mentors and teachers of many influential Muslim politicians, scholars, opinion makers, and activists. As a result of these waves of globalization, as Osman perceptively observes, Muslims in Malaysia have grown in number and the faith's impact on society has deepened. As the world became more globalized and sophisticated in terms of technology, transport, and communications, the reach of Islam in Malaysia became more extensive than ever before.[18]

Put it differently, Islam and Islamization in Malaysia grew with globalization and derived much strength from it. To arrive at a more nuanced picture of the impact of these three waves of globalization and the influence of intellectual currents from overseas upon the evolution of Islam in Malaysia, this book illuminates on how local actors, states, institutions, and collectives appropriated ideas, peoples, goods, technologies, arts, and cultures and combined them to fit unique local contexts. Entwined history, from this angle of vision, is an approach that places the global and the local within a single unit of analysis to explain fully the Malaysian-Islamic "historical complex."[19]

Policies of States and Everyday Agency of Societies

States and societies form the bedrocks of civilizations, and the Muslim civilization was no exception. John Esposito sums it up well: "Islam is not simply a spiritual community. Rather, it also became a state, an empire. Islam developed as a religiopolitical movement in which religion was integral to state and society."[20] Seen in this light, the writing of an entwined history of Islam in Malaysia can only be complete when we consider the interrelationships between the conduct of states and the everyday agency of the common people. For more than seven centuries since Muslims established the first Muslim state in Perlak, political power in island Southeast Asia lay in the hands of *kerajaan*, which were essentially states ruled by charismatic and divinely inspired kings whose continuous hegemony rested on both the coercion and consent of societies.

The *kerajaan* had no clearly defined borders or territories until the advent of colonialism, when technologies of mapping as well as the demarcation of spheres of influence were enforced. In many ways, the kerajaan predated today's ideal of the borderless world where people could move in and out of protected spaces without having to carry with them the burden of preceding identity and past loyalties. The *raja* (king) embodied the state and the people. Drawing from Persian and Turkish notions of kingship, Malay texts mythologized the rajas as the *zillullah fil-alam* (God's shadow in the world) to be revered, respected, and served. To quote Anthony Milner, the raja was "central to every aspect of Malay life."[21] He was the custodian of Islam, the promoter of the religion, who infused it through diplomacy, conquests, and supporting missionaries. Through him, the *shari'a* (Islamic legal code), along with the Malay *adat* (customs), were preserved and implemented in Malay states of what would soon be known as Malaysia. The raja was, however, dependent and beholden to men and women in societies who venerated him when he embodied peace and justice but would rebel against him in the event of political turmoil and widespread injustice. The Malay proverb *Raja yang adil disembah, raja yang zalim disanggah* (A just king is to be obeyed, a cruel king is to be defied) captures this reciprocal relationship between the ruler and the ruled in Malaysia well. To be a king was to either be benevolent or risk revolt.[22]

The powers of the rajas eclipsed when Malay kingdoms fell under European rule, beginning with the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese in 1511. With the exception of the port cities of Penang, Melaka, and Singapore, the colonial powers did not obliterate the functions of the rajas totally. Colonialism brought about the imposition of a secular system of governance that coexisted alongside the kerajaan order. The colonial state, unlike kerajaan, however, sharpened the notions of

territory, relegated the shari'a to the realm of personal and family laws, and organized groups in society along the lines of divide and rule politics. This resulted to the creation of a plural society that was divided along racial lines. Islam and the rights of Malays as the indigenous peoples were legally upheld, but their political influence and bureaucratic significance were severely curtailed.[23]

The approach of entwined history takes into account these longue durée developments and the effects on the changing roles of states upon societies in the postcolonial period. I narrate the ways in which states and societies weathered different systems of governance. When states became weak and unable to manage societies under their jurisdiction, ordinary people take on the mantle of defending their rights and faith. This can be vividly discerned in the colonial states' imposition of forms of knowledge and statecraft that honed racial and religious divisions. Muslims responded through violent *jihad* (struggle) and through reformist movements in the path to rebuild societies that could no longer depend on the declining authority of the kerajaan. Amidst these contestations, a plural society consisting of various distinct races became a permanent feature of Malaysia. Rajas were consigned to being symbols of Malayness. Islam became ethnicized and regarded as an essential marker of the Malay identity by the postcolonial states that inherited racialized ideas of the religion from the colonial rulers.[24]

The everyday agency of Muslims in societies in postcolonial Malaysia was constantly stirred by the states' concern with sustaining the dominance of Malay Muslims over other ethnic groups. In the last chapter of this book, I show that this has led to cycles of resistance and calls for reforms by intellectuals, political parties, and civil society organizations, with the most iconic being the *Reformasi* movement that began in 1998. By the turn of the twenty-first century, Malay-Muslim youths based in Malaysia and overseas were at the vanguard of many initiatives that questioned the policies of the Malaysian state through the use of cyberspace, boycotts, and demonstrations as expressed in the Bersih rallies. These movements aimed at recovering the cosmopolitan character of Malaysian life and politics as well as of Malaysian Islam in the face of injustice.[25] Undoubtedly, amidst the long-running contests and struggles between states and societies, Islam in Malaysia continued to remain moderate and cosmopolitan at the everyday level. But the postcolonial state, I contend, has yet to keep pace with the changes in Malaysia. The recent 2018 general elections provide a glimmer of hope.[26]

Scholarly and Popular Pieties

The tensions and dialogues between scholars and other purveyors and practitioners of Islam form another aspect of entwined history. The ulama are universally seen

in Islam as *warath al-anbiya'* (the inheritors of the Prophet), acting as an intermediary between the state and society. Or as a prominent Malay-Indonesian Muslim scholar, Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul Karim Amrullah (Hamka), has it, to take on the mantle of the ulama is to balance the rage of the people and pressure from the state.[27] For over a millennium in Malaysia, the ulama were held in reverence as persons who were trained in religious texts and were acquainted of the changing demands of the contexts in which they were situated. Such in-depth knowledge of both texts and contexts enabled them to take on a whole array of professions from serving as government officials, *muftis* (expounder of Islamic laws), and *qadis* (judges), to performing the roles of religious teachers, counselors, village headmen, missionaries, and leaders of reform and piety movements. Many ulama participated in *perang sabil* (holy war) against the European powers as and when religious beliefs were under threat. Much like the ulama in South Asia and the Middle East, the ulama in Malaysia "continue to enlarge their audiences, to shape debates on the meaning and place of Islam in public life, to lead activist movements in pursuit of their ideals. For them, there is no single way of defending their ideals or of making them practical or relevant in the world."[28] In employing the term ulama in this book, I am referring to two schools of Islamic scholars: the traditional and reformist. Both exercised a high degree of influence upon local societies, and both were sometimes locked in intellectual combat with one another about which version Islam ought to be taught and disseminated in society. Both schools of ulama disprove the observations made by some analysts that Malaysia did not have a long heritage of autonomous ulama.[29] The independence and vivacity of the ulama went as far back as the period when Islam began to found its footing in Malaysia right up till today. These ulama functioned as conduits between lived and normative Islam in their pursuit to make societies more receptive to the laws and universal values of Islam.

As persons who were steeped in the knowledge of the laws and maxims of Islam, the ulama have come in conflict with popular expressions of Islamic pieties. To Bruce Lawrence, popular Islam is "the shared notion of a world view and a pattern of living that characterizes most Muslims in Asia and Africa."[30] Pervasive as popular Islam may be, such manifestations of Islam do not resonate with most ulama, whose reasoning is usually centered on unyielding compliance to scriptural injunctions. "Popular Islam," according to John Voll, "is often defined in negative terms as Islamic experience that has been "diluted" by non-Islamic practices. Traditionally strict ulama as well as modern intellectuals tend to condemn what they see as magical practices and superstitions."[31] This book examines the various popular displays and articulations of Islam that have come under the intellectual chopping block of the ulama. Notable among these were those propagated by mystical groups and by modernist and secular activists who gained prominence

starting in the nineteenth century with the rapid spread of colonial education in Malaysia and the return of students who studied in the West. Supported and sponsored by state institutions and state Islamization programs since the mid-1980s, the ulama in Malaysia have vigorously declared many individuals and groups as deviant should their teachings run contrary to the time-honored Asharite theology and Shafi'ite school of law that formed the dominant frame of reference for Muslims in Southeast Asia for many generations. Among those that came under the critique by the ulama were, at times, the ulama themselves, as seen in the case of the banning and stigmatization of the reformist Kaum Muda movement and Salafi scholars in colonial and postcolonial Malaysia.[32]

This book goes beyond detailing the confrontations among the ulama and between the ulama and the common people. It strives to make apparent the intersections between scholarly discourses of the ulama and popular pieties to show that both influenced and sometimes fed off one another. That scholarly discourses intersect with popular pieties can be clearly seen in the case of religious movements such as the Darul Arqam, ABIM, Parti Islam Semalaysia (PAS), and the Islamic Representative Council (IRC). The ulama who were active in these groups appealed to the masses and stirred up popular pieties to mobilize Muslims. The scholars and the ordinary Muslims are interdependent just as scripturalist Islam derives its strength from popular pieties. The scholars furthered the processes of rationalization in Malay-Muslim society as they transitioned from Hindu-Buddhism to Islam and from feudalism to modernity, just as they were questioned by the learned masses when they fell short of upholding the importance of rationality and when they failed to adapt to social and global changes.[33]

The Roles of Muslims and Non-Muslims

One of the long-standing problems in Islamic historiography is the lack of attentiveness to non-Muslim voices in the overall historical narrative. This tendency pervades the writings of historians, particularly those working on the early stages of Islamization in the Arab world, according to Robert Hoyland in his latest and influential book. The role of Muslims and the divine are duly emphasized in contrast to the crucial involvement of non-Muslims in shaping the course of Muslim history.[34] Hyperbolic as this observation may appear, it nevertheless captures, for the most part, the tenor of the historical writings on Islam in Malaysia. Many of the works written thus far sidestep the roles of non-Muslims in the processes of Islamization in Malaysia. When non-Muslims are mentioned, either they are portrayed as recipients of the Islamic message through *da'wah* (missionary) efforts or it is held that they pose serious challenges to Islam as an expanding force and dominant faith in Malaysia.

This book provides a corrective to this prevailing conception of the place of non-Muslims in the history of Islam in Malaysia. I show that non-Muslims contributed much to the growth and vitality of Islam and Muslims in Malaysia through their contacts and engagements with Muslims. Non-Muslims' contributions can be found in a few key areas. They were, first of all, active in the fostering trade and commerce in Malaysia which linked the region to other parts of the world, especially the Muslim world. The non-Muslims who traded and worked alongside Muslims made possible the realization of the "Age of Commerce" in Malaysia in the sixteenth century while expanding economic activities up until the present. With trade and commerce came Islam and more Muslims into Malaysia from regions such as India, China, West Africa, Central Asia, the Arab world, and parts of southern Europe.[35] Due to such interchanges, carried out in the most dynamic of ways, the number of Muslims in Malaysia expanded rapidly through time. Indeed, the Pew Research Center projects that, by 2020, Muslims will constitute 66.1 percent of the total population in Malaysia. This exponential growth in the number of Muslims since the last millennium is not unique to Malaysia. It reflects the global spread of Islam that can be attributed to a high fertility rate and conversions to the religion. The migration of other religious communities out of Malaysia since the last five decades has further tilted the ethnic makeup in favor of Muslims.[36]

The second area of contribution lay in statecraft and politics. Non-Muslims formed part of the power configurations of Malaysia. Cosmopolitanism was a feature of Malaysian society for many centuries before it underwent massive changes effected by the colonial rulers who widened differences rather than ensuring that the roles, functions, and identities of different ethnic groups would overlap as they had in the past.[37] During the age of the kerajaan, the non-Muslim orang Asli tribes served as chiefs and even bodyguards for the kings as well as nobles. Their significance in Malay politics was well recorded in many *hikayats* (court texts).[38] Non-Muslims continue to serve as government officials in Malaysia to this very moment. They built alliances with and became part of the conservative Islamic party PAS in order to provide a unified stand against the political hold of the *Barisan Nasional* (National Alliance).[39] They have been instrumental in upholding Islam as the national religion of Malaysia and also recognizing the rights of Malay Muslims in the country.

Above all, non-Muslims have also interacted with Muslims in Malaysia on a day-to-day basis in many important sectors, such as education, health, sports, and all other areas of everyday life. While it is irrefutable that colonialism brought many problems to Malaysia, from racism to environmental degradation to the destruction of local economies and the end of the kerajaan supremacy, the colonial powers also established educational and other institutions that were built upon

by subsequent governments. Non-Muslim scholars have contributed immensely as scholars working on Islam and Muslims in Malaysia. Prejudices and biases are present in a segment of these writings. As the doyen of Malaysian studies, Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, points out, one of the significant effects of Western orientalism, for example, was the invasion of the Malay "epistemological space."[40] Still, many non-Muslim scholars have laid the crucial foundations for a systematic documentation of Malay histories.

There is, of course, no denying that there have been skirmishes between Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia as Muslim missionaries supercharged their Islamization efforts to gain more converts ever since Hindu-Buddhist era right up to the postcolonial period when Islam was declared as Malaysia's official religion. More recently, tensions have arisen over issues of conversion in and out of Islam, over missionizing efforts of Christian and other proselytizers, and over the right to spaces for religious worship and the organization of religious festivals.[41] The May 1969 riots that broke out in Kuala Lumpur, which resulted in hundreds of Muslim and non-Muslim casualties, is a painful reminder of the volatility of religious and racial relations in Malaysia when exploited by those who stoke the fires of hate and divisiveness. Even so, the entwined history of Islam in Malaysia offered here tells us that Muslims and non-Muslims have learned to coexist and assist one another within a shared space for hundreds of years, even with the many challenges that emerged in the process. The balance sheet of history also shows that cooperation rather than conflict was the rule of the day.[42]

Much more could be done to protect the rights of non-Muslims and encourage Muslims to reach out to their fellow non-Muslim Malaysians in assuring them that they too are equal citizens in the country and therefore need not feel insecure. Muslim scholars and activists, among them the famed Chandra Muzaffar, have been at the forefront in bridging the divide between religious and ethnic groups.[43]

Periodization

Writing an entwined history necessitates us to reconsider the periodizations that have been offered by past historians of Islam in Malaysia in particular and of the history of the Islamic world in general. Anthony Reid calls for a new periodization that is free from Eurocentric bias. He proposes "Early Modern" as an alternative against terms such as "Renaissance," "Reformation," or "Age of Discovery."[44] Yet the concept "modern," be it early, late, or postmodern, comes with a set of problems when applied to Islamic history. It implies that a set of global processes, emerging as it did from Europe, had rapidly cast a long shadow on Muslim's conception of life and the world. This unidirectional periodization of history masks

the many other developments within Muslim societies in Malaysia that may not have been necessarily affected by the march of modernity. What is required right now is a fresh conceptualization of historical eras that truly reflects the evolution of Islam in Malaysia.

Here, I propose a new periodization that registers the fact that Islamization in Malaysia and in Southeast Asia in general was not a linear and progressive phenomenon but that it "waxed and waned, that took its strength from an irregular pattern of pulses over centuries."[45] My proposed periodization is, of course, not watertight or exhaustive; to paraphrase Fred Donner, "no single periodization will be 'ideal'; the apparent boundaries that delimit any periodization may mark a decisive change in some aspects of society but will be certainly be spanned by continuities in other aspects."[46] The attention here is on how time periods overlap with one another, on how developments in earlier periods persisted for some generations by virtue of their importance in the lives and sensibilities of the individuals, collectives, movements, and institutions that purveyed them. Moreover, this new periodization reflects the dominant and shifting trends in the infusion of Islam in Malaysia and how it was shaped by the four forces of entwined history discussed above. It is a periodization that captures the events and actors on the ground while avoiding progressivist and teleological assumptions. Through it, I hope to decenter unitary theories that depict Malaysians—and, for that matter, Southeast Asian Muslims in general—as passive recipients of Islam that came from all corners of the globe. Far from it. They were, in point of fact, active agents or, should I say, brokers of Islamization.[47]

This book is organized along the following periodization: gradualist Islamization (eleventh to thirteenth centuries), populist Islamization (fourteenth to eighteenth centuries), reformist Islamization (nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries), and triumphalist Islamization (mid-twentieth to twenty-first centuries). I will elaborate on these four periods throughout the volume. For the time being, it is important here to clarify what I mean by "Malaysia." The idea of Malaysia is a recent invention and has undergone several name and boundary changes in history. Malaysia as a geographical construct became more clearly defined out of the British and postcolonial governments' resolve to unify the various states in the Malay peninsula and the island of Borneo. That said, historians of Malaysia such as Leonard Andaya, Barbara Andaya, Virginia Hooker, and Cheah Boon Kheng have highlighted the validity of the use of the term "Malaysia" to describe the thirteen states and three federal territories of present-day Malaysia. All of these domains share some common elements in the realms of language, culture, and heritage.[48] For the sake for greater clarity and in keeping with the fluidity of boundaries across time periods, I conceptualize Malaysia as a geobody that includes Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, the Riau Islands, Patani, Mindanao,

and the Malay Peninsula from the earliest period until 1965. Upon the establishment of Indonesia and the separation of Singapore, the territory is limited to the Malay peninsula, Sabah, and Sarawak.

Organization of the Book

The first part of this book examines the gradualist phase of Islamization (eleventh to thirteenth centuries) in Malaysia. This was a period that saw a slow and largely peaceful infusion of Islam among the previously animist-Hindu-Buddhist Malay polities. Chapter 1 uncovers the connectedness of Malay societies that made it conducive for Muslim traders and travelers who traversed the Indian Ocean to live alongside non-Muslim Malays, thereby introducing Islam in an incidental fashion. These traders and travelers were, later on, joined by rulers, Sufi missionaries, and Islamic scholars hailing from the Arab world, South Asia, China, and Southeast Asia, who gained new converts through direct preaching. Even though many Malays embraced Islam during this phase, their conversion did not radically change the outlook and governance of Malay states. Hindu-Buddhist-animist frames of reference were generally maintained by the masses as the common people slowly internalized the tenets of Islam. Islamic and pre-Islamic codes of laws and ethics were fused together by Malay elites in the management of their societies so as to not disrupt the age-old cultures that the common people held on to.

Chapter 2 bridges the gradualist with the populist phase of Islamization discussed later in the book. The emotive and mystical dimensions of the infusion and reception of Islam among the Malays are considered. How the Sufis gained Muslim converts through spiritual and cultural means—employing *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet play), *dikir barat* (lyrical verse debate), folk tales, religious stories, magic, and other forms of mystical arts as Islamizing tools—is explained. I then transition to what Tijana Krstić termed as the "Islamic tradition of conversion narratives"[49] found in Malay hikayat texts inspired by Sufi and mystical themes. These narratives are valuable in understanding how early Malay Muslims made sense and sought to explain the significance of their conversion to Islam as a means to persuade the wider society to adopt the new faith. Sufi and mystical themes served another function: they masked underlying pragmatic and strategic motives that prompted Malay elites to accept Islam in the age of the expansion of Islamic empires.

Part II shifts gears, looking at Islam's rapid spread among the masses in Malaysia, or what I call the populist Islamization (fourteenth to eighteenth centuries) of the Malays. Chapter 3 examines the role of kingdoms in transforming Islam into a force to be reckoned with in Malaysia. Be it through diplomacy, conquest,

trade, or tribute, the rajas worked hand in hand with overseas Muslim and non-Muslim empires as well as local societies to infuse Islam in all corners of Malaysia. The states of Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan, Pahang, Johor, Patani, Brunei, and Melaka positioned themselves as Islamizers and defenders of the faith akin to the Safavids and the Ottomans that these states hoped to emulate up until the eighteenth century. Muslim kings employed a range of subtle and hard strategies to widen their command over non-Muslim polities. This story of kerajaan proselytism would not be complete without a thorough consideration of efforts of non-state and female actors.

Chapter 4 uncovers the premiership of Cik Siti Wan Kembang, the ruler of the state of Kelantan from 1610 to 1677. Her rise to power and successful reign provides an illustrative sample of the varied roles Muslim women played in the Islamization of the Malays. This chapter also delves into the creative missionizing methods and links formed by Muslim scholars and emissaries. Networks of Islamic scholars in Malaysia who studied in Patani, the Hijaz, Cairo, and Hadramaut and the movement of Muslims along the hajj routes aided in the diffusion of Islam among the locals in mosques, *suraus* (prayer) places, and other religious institutions. Among the scholars prominent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Tok Pulau Manis (Syaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah). Drawing from the flourishing literary world of kingdoms in Pasai and Perlak, these scholars introduced the Jawi script into Malaysia, which soon replaced the old Pallava script from India. Finally, the chapter highlights the part played by foreigners such as the Chinese Muslims in Malaysia who acted as emissaries of non-Muslim kingdoms cum missionaries of Islam. The efforts of Admiral Cheng Ho are analyzed, most notably the impact of his diplomatic trips in furthering the preaching of Islam in Melaka and other Malay states.[50] Upon Melaka's fall into the hands of the Portuguese in 1511, the mantle of Islamization went to other neighboring Malay states till the closing decades of the seventeenth century.

The heyday of elite and populist Islamization was not to last. By the late nineteenth century, the colonial powers had placed much of Malaysia under its informal or formal rule. This marked the beginnings of the reformist Islamization (nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries) whereby violent jihad, educational reforms, religious movements, and intellectual discourses were used to protect, preserve, and extend the reach of the Islamic faith into the local population. Chapter 5 looks at institutions and other policies created by the British to address Muslim affairs. The Majlis Ugama Islam (or sometimes referred to as "Majlis Agama Islam," meaning "Islamic Religious Council") established since the early twentieth century was one of them. Although modeled upon British experience in Egypt and India with the aim of bureaucratizing Islam in Malaysia, these institutions were also platforms for the propagation of Islam as local Muslims

collaborated with the British in restructuring Muslim lives. Orientalism under the sponsorship of colonial states also helped to create deeper appreciation by Muslims of their own faith and history. Although regulated, the hajj continued as an avenue where reformist and modernist ideas flowed into and out of Malaysia. Colonialism was, in hindsight, Islamization by other means, or "colonial Islamization." Here I provide a counterpoint to previously held arguments that colonialism in Malaysia arrested the infusion of Islam.[51] The reverse held true, though it must also be acknowledged that colonialism resulted in fragmentation of the Muslim community into Anglophones and British-compliant elites against other social groups.

Beyond institutions of its own making, colonialism spurred Muslim scholars and reformers to construct new institutions and associations. *Pondoks* (village boarding schools) and *madrasahs* (Islamic schools) acted as launchpads for intellectual and spiritual movements that transformed the Malay-Muslim conception of Islam to one that was empowering and confident. Malay-Muslim modernists and reformists shunned secularism, intellectual backwardness, and decadence, calling for Muslims to use the tools and ideals of modernity to their advantage. This is the focus of Chapter 6, centered around the outbreaks of holy battles in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Singapore, which were stirred by a sense of disenfranchisement and Muslim perceptions that the colonial powers were working against Islam. Although largely failed campaigns, these violent episodes awakened the Malay Muslims to the need to reform themselves. I examine the reform efforts of To' Kenali and his modernized pondoks as well as the growth of Islamic modernist ideas championed by the Al-Imam group in Singapore and students returning from Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Revivalists in the Arab world, Turkey, and South Asia influenced these local reformists. At the same time, they promulgated new ideas that laid bare the problems of *taqlid* (blind obedience) in Malaysia. Islamic modernism developed in conjunction with the revival of traditionalism, both of which had unique visions of how Muslims ought to reform themselves. The rapid growth of political movements and parties are emphasized in this chapter to demonstrate the effervescence of anti-colonial Islamization in Malaysia that eventually led to the country's independence.

Finally, the last part of the book looks at the triumphalist Islamization that characterized Malaysia from the post-independence years up to the twentieth century. I use the word triumphalist because it is a type of Islamization that emphasized the superiority and hegemony of certain versions of Islam above all other ideologies and systems of life. Chapter 7 examines the postcolonial state's quest to construct a "Malay-triumphalist Islam." This was achieved through legal measures as evinced in the enshrining of Islam in the constitution through the construction of national mosques and other Islamic monuments. The state also

created enforcement agencies, organized mass events, and promulgated slogans to generate a Malaysian-centric Islam that was colored with strong pro-Malay undertones. The racial riots that broke out on May 13, 1969, further accelerated the process of Islamization in the country in favor of the Malay Muslims. Such policies yielded contradictory outcomes. While uniting Malay Muslims under the banner of Islam, the state policies also displeased non-Malay Muslims and non-Muslims in the country who saw Malay-triumphalist Islam as an infringement on their status as equal citizens. Islamic policies under the aegis of the United Malay Nationalist Organization (UMNO) were not left unchallenged.

Chapter 8 turns the readers' attention to global Islamic resurgence as an alternative form of triumphalist Islamization. The state attempted, on many occasions, to tame this resurgent and equally assertive form of Islam through coercive and co-optation strategies. The effectiveness of these policies reached its zenith in 1998 on the eve of the reformist movement. Islamic movements and Islamic opposition parties closed ranks and battled against the state's hegemony. They derived their strength and inspiration from a globalized Islam.[52] Amidst this struggle between the state and civil society actors, the notion of a total Islamization of society, of "halalization,"[53] and the implementation of the shari'a to cover all aspects of Muslim life bound the opposing groups together, causing much anxiety for non-Muslims and inspiring the development of counter-Islamization and liberal civil society groups.[54] Prominent among such groups to be discussed are the Sisters in Islam (SIS) and the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF).[55]

The book closes with brief reflections on recent developments in Malaysia. After analyzing a millennium's journey through the lenses of entwined history, it is clear to me that Islamization in Malaysia is now in state of flux. Debates over *halal* (permissible) food, the hudud, the prohibition of the use of "Allah" by non-Muslims, sectarianism among Sufis and Salafis, culture wars between liberals and conservatives, and regime change that saw the end of UMNO's dominance in Malaysian politics, among many others, inform us that Islam in Malaysia is, without a doubt, a riveting case study that can shed light on the ways in which Islam in other parts of the world has developed over time. This book is an invitation to a deeper attentiveness to that past and toward recognizing that the histories and destinies of Muslims, wherever they may be, have always been entwined.

PART I

Gradualist Islamization

1

Infusing Islam in Connected Societies

SOMETIME IN 1887, a group of Muslim villagers encountered a strange object tucked at the bank of the Tersat river, in Terengganu. It was a large stone engraved with Arabic inscriptions. Fascinated but fearful of the stone, a local *imam* (prayer leader or religious teacher) was called to the site to verify whether the object was of any significance. The imam instructed all those present to carry the stone to a nearby *surau* (prayer place), where it was retrieved by an Arab trader named Sayyid Husin bin Ghulam al-Bukhari. He then presented the stone to the king, Sultan Zainal-Abidin. Preserved by the enlightened king at a Malay fort on Bukit Puteri, oral stories in Terengganu have it that scholars from as far as Makkah were asked to interpret the inscriptions on the stone.[1] The stone was left untouched for some years after efforts to determine what was written on it proved futile or of no use to the state or the people. It was only upon the arrival of British orientalists in the early twentieth century that critical questions about what came to be known as the "Terengganu stone" were raised. If the villagers, the imam, the Arab trader, and the king perceived the stone as an enigma to be preserved, Muslim as well as non-Muslim scholars deemed it as a testimony that Islam had in fact planted its roots in Malaysia much earlier than they had previously presumed. The Terengganu stone revealed that Hindu-Buddhist ideas coexisted alongside the teachings of Islam, as the new religion spread gradually in the precolonial Malay world (which included modern-day Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Philippines, South Thailand, and Brunei).[2]

A rare gem that could be dated back to the early fourteenth century, the Terengganu stone was just one among the many archaeological findings uncovered and deciphered over the years. Coins, cannons, tombstones, and other valuable discoveries all point to the more than millennium-old presence of Islam in many states that would later became known as Malaysia. This chapter begins with a particularly intriguing story about the unearthing of the Terengganu stone

because it clearly illustrates to us the entwined history of Islam in Malaysia. The common people, scholars from Makkah, the ruler, the trader, Muslims, non-Muslims, and states were all involved in the process of making sense of how Islam came to Malaysia and how it grew to become a dominant religion. This same set of people, based locally and globally, were important characters that shed light on how Islam in Malaysia was lived and explained after hundreds of years of accepting Islam. Old beliefs endured and were grafted along with new Islamic idioms and practices, forming a hybrid synthesis that still fascinates scholars today. Indeed, Islamization in Malaysia is a collaborative venture made possible by the interactions and synergies between persons from varying backgrounds.

We will return to the Terengganu stone again later. To understand why and how Islam as a young faith among the many world religions came to Malaysia, it is important first to explain the texture of Malay religiosity—the Hindu-Buddhist-animist historical complex—prior to the arrival of early Muslims. The picture painted here is that of religious continuity and change in intensely connected societies. Although Islam eventually became the majority religion in Malaysia, remnants of past faiths and beliefs lived on, making Malaysian Islam a unique blend of the past and the present. Islamization during the period that stretched from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries was slow but sure as Muslims navigated their way around the various Hindu-Buddhist-animist religious landscapes. It was, to put it in the words of the English historian, Thomas Arnold, a *penetration pacifique* (peaceful penetration).[3]

A word on the geography and evolution of faiths surrounding Malaysia before the infusion of Islam is helpful here. Upon the withering of animism as the majority religion, the Malay states entered into a suzerain-tributary relationship with three rivaling *mandalas* (circle of kings). To the north was the Funan empire, which lasted from the third to the ninth centuries, with its center in the Mekong Delta, in what is today Cambodia. Funan was a kingdom that was deeply influenced by Hinduism before Buddhism was cultivated from the sixth century onward, bringing about a fusion of Hindu, Buddhist, and local religions. To the west of Malaysia along the Straits of Melaka was the Sumatran-based Srivijaya empire (seventh to fourteenth centuries). Avowedly Buddhist in orientation, the Srivijaya empire was also the seat of learning for Chinese pilgrims seeking knowledge of the teachings of Buddha. At the peak of its power, Srivijaya had at least fourteen tributary states. Further south was the Hindu Majapahit empire in Java, which was the most powerful maritime empire in island Southeast Asia from the thirteenth till the seventeenth centuries. Together with influences from China and India, these three main faith-based states were thalassocracies, with maritime realms that patronized and promoted the Hindu-Buddhist-animist complex that Malays adhered to for many centuries prior to Islam.[4]

The Animist-Hindu-Buddhist Religious Complex

Malays adhered to folk and other world religions far longer than to Islam. Animism was the form of belief that shaped the everyday lives of "Proto-Malays" and "Deutero-Malays"[5] for hundreds of years. Though not a scripture-centered belief with established set of rituals, dogmas, and eschatologies, animism in Malaysia was marked by a number of features that persisted among the aboriginal tribes in Malaysia and even among many Malay Muslims till the present.[6] The first feature is the belief in spirits. For Malay animists, the world was inhabited by all sorts of spirits that could harm or benefit humankind. These spirits were found in all realms of life—in homes, the seas, mountains, forests, plantations, animals, and stones, all of which have *semangat* (souls) of their own. Malay animists believed that the spirits of their ancestors would return to their former homes on certain days following their demise. Hence offerings and chants were read by kith and kin during such times. The word "hantu," or ghost, was used to describe a certain kind of spirit that brought mischief in human life. A number of studies have indicated that Proto- and Deutero-Malays believed in the widest variety of graphically named ghosts in comparison to other cultures. More than a thousand years of Islamization and modernization have done little to eradicate such beliefs, which have become a permanent feature of the Malay belief system.[7]

Linked to the belief in spirits was the reverence shown toward shamans and soothsayers. Knowledgeable in medicine, magic, and sorcery while endowed with the exceptional ability to communicate with the spirit world, shamans, also known as *dukun, bomoh*, or *pawang*, were sought out by Malays in the event of any sickness or personal as well as communal misfortune, all of which were attributed to the mischief of evil spirits. The Orang Asli shamans were deemed the most powerful. Their importance in the spiritual life of the Malays remained strong even after Islam came to Malaysia and Muslims pursued the assistance of non-Muslim shamans. When dealing with the world of spirits, religion did not matter greatly. Shamans fulfilled the role of soothsayers (*petenung* or *tukang tenung* or *tukang tilik*) as well. They gave advice on a host of issues, from selecting dates for special events to selection of marriage partners, the conduct of coronation ceremonies, and in matters pertaining to the interpretation of dreams.[8]

To be an animist also entailed one being in constant harmony with the world of nature. Proto-Malay animists respected their surroundings, ensuring that the natural environment was not disrupted by human beings. They stressed deeply maintaining balance between human activities and environmental protection, shunning all forms of exploitation of animal and vegetal life. For the animist Malays, upsetting nature's balance carried with it the wrath of spirits. It was for the same reason that many Proto-Malays in ancient Malaysia worshiped nature: they offered sacrifices and burnt offerings to appease the omnipresent spirits.[9]

Animist beliefs and the fear of the unseen did not stifle the development of trade and the growth of civilization in Malaysia. Cashing in on their expertise in hunting and gathering and their knowledge of the forest and other natural resources, Proto-Malays established contacts with Arab, Indian, Chinese, and Persian traders many centuries before Hindu-Buddhist ideas gained currency in the region. Ancient Indian geographers and travel writers wrote of "Malaya-Dvipa," the mountainous areas of the Malay Peninsula. The Greco-Egyptian geographer Claudius Ptolemy (100–170) included in his magnum opus, *Geographike Uphegesis* (Guide to Geography), written in 150, a number of place names in Malaysia, indicating the importance of that region to the Greeks. Chinese travelers and traders too documented their trips to northern Malaysia. They recorded commercial activities with different tribes of the peninsula. The Chinese named Malay states in accordance with their native tongues. Hence Pahang was named "Pong-fong," Terengganu was "Tong-ya-nong," Kelantan became "Chi-lan-tan," and "Kuala Berang" was called "Fo-lo-an."[10] Arab, Indian, Greek, and Chinese knowledge of Malaysia was made possible mainly by the Indian Ocean and the Silk Road, the major highways that connected ancient Malay states with the rest of the world.[11]

The spread of Hindu and Buddhist ideas in Southeast Asia introduced new notions about the purpose of life and eschatology among the Malays. These Indic religions arrived in various parts of Malaysia as early as the first century AD through traders who described Malaysia as the "Golden Khersonese (Land of Gold)" or the "land of spices." The region was rich with musk, ginger, rattan, sandalwood, camphor, resin, honey, beeswax, areca nuts, sepang wood, black woods, and pearls. Trade connected Malaysia to the rest of the world in these moments when animism was slowly giving way to Indic religions.[12] Four centuries later, a Hindu and Buddhist presence was already evident on the north and east coasts of the Malay Peninsula. The faith spread slowly across Malaysia in the centuries that followed. Much like Islam, which came later, Hindu and Buddhist ideas were introduced peacefully among the locals. But unlike Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism were purveyed largely by high-caste Indians. Islam was infused through the work of Muslims from diverse backgrounds.[13]

The impact of these Indic religions on the Malay elites was profound and was kept alive by sway of the Funan and Srivijayan empires that patronized the Malay states from the first to the thirteenth centuries. Still, "Hinduism" and "Buddhism" as we understand them today, as organized faiths or "isms," were internalized and utilized selectively rather than wholeheartedly by the Malays. That is to say, Malays did not accept Hinduism and Buddhism and, later on, Islamic ideas and faiths indiscriminately. As George Coedès beautifully explains, they kept to "their own genius" and took what was relevant to enhance and enrich

the indigenous essences. They ensured that all borrowings from outside sources did not destabilize local customs and age-old cultures passed down from the animistic era. Moreover, the Malays, both elites and the common people, displayed inclusiveness toward different strands of Indic faiths—so much so that Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism co-existed alongside each other. The Brahman priests and Buddhist monks, scholars in their own right, did not impose religious practices from their own countries on the Malays. Rather, they embraced and facilitated the Malay inclinations toward religious and cultural synthesis. Hence, a more accurate term to describe the Malay worldview and religious praxis before the coming of Islam is "Hindu-Buddhist."[14]

Malay kingdoms were structured in accordance with the mandala system. Power resided in men of prowess, who depended on personal relationships to ensure the continuing influence of their polities. Notions of divine kingship were adopted. The kings projected themselves as the embodiment of God or God's descendants or both. Malay kings used Hindu-Buddhist regalia, which consisted primarily of the crown, the royal umbrella, and elaborate ceremonies to showcase strength, grandeur, and the magical powers of the royalty.[15] Manu legal codes originating in India were introduced in many Malay states. Interestingly, the caste system enforced in India was barely present in the Malay states because the notion of hereditary transmission of occupation and social status was not in line with the indigenous idea of social mobility. The Malays further recast the socio-political order developed by their Indian counterparts. Although they accepted the Sanskrit titles "Bendahara" and "Laksamana" to describe the prime ministers and admirals who looked into much of the affairs of the kerajaan, other titles such as *penghulu* (village chief) and *datu* (nobleman) were maintained and thus survived the transition from the animist to the Hindu-Buddhist eras. These chiefs were bounded together by way of loyalty to divine kings and through familial relations.[16]

Any wayfarer who journeyed into Malaysia before the eleventh century would inevitably encounter Indic architecture as well as woodcarving, stone sculptures, decorative textile paintings, and metal works that flourished under Hindu-Buddhist influence. Known to Chinese travelers as "Lang-ya-sieu," "Langka-su," "Lang-ya-si," or "Langkasuka, the area that covered much of the states of Patani and Kedah was regarded as the hub of Hindu-Buddhist worship. More than fifty *candis* (tomb temples) dating at far back as the fifth century AD have been uncovered in Bujang Valley, Kedah (see Figure 1.1). Painstaking research done by local Malaysian archaeologists in recent decades revealed the strong links forged between Kedah and Srivijaya and between Kedah and kingdoms in China and India before the arrival of Islam.[17] The same highly edifying findings were found in Seberang Perai in Penang, the Kelantan river basin, Pulau Tioman,

and Kuala Selinsing in Perak. Elaborated bronze statues of Buddha, temple sites and ruins, seals, earthenware, coins, ceramics, and other beautifully decorated items unearthed in other Malay states all point to a high degree of artistic sophistication and advancements in the technology that Malays achieved during the Hindu-Buddhist period. These discoveries also lend credence to the arguments made by orientalists that Buddhist ideas were more prevalent in the northern states of Malaysia than in other Malay states, though much of the Malay world borrowed many aspects of, or were influenced by, Hindu beliefs.[18]

The impact of the Sanskrit language and writing deserves some further elaboration here. The Malay world was part of the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis," which Sheldon Pollock discussed at great length in his classic *The Language of Gods in the World of Men*.[19] Malays used the Pallava script on stone edicts and court texts commissioned by kings. They added grammatical marks to make Sanskrit words congruent with local pronunciations.[20] Hundreds of Sanskrit loan words such as *derhaka* (treason), *raja* (ruler), *negara* (state), *bahasa* (language), *bakti* (service), *bidadari* (angel), *bumi* (earth), *desa* (countryside), *guru* (teacher), and *manusia* (human beings) were infused with Old Malay to form a hybrid language. The dominance that Sanskrit terms had in Malay religious life was evinced in many key religious concepts. *Agama* (religion), *sembahyang* (prayer), *puasa* (fasting),



FIGURE 1.1 Bujang Valley Candi

pahala (rewards for good deeds), *dosa* (sins), *syurga* (heaven), *neraka* (hell), and *puji* (worship) were terms derived from Sanskrit and used by Malays in their day-to-day worship and practice of the Hindu-Buddhist faith. These concepts have barely been replaced by Arab-Islamic religious concepts to this very day.[21] Sanskrit traces can also be discerned in Malay versions of the Indian epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. These texts, translated as early as the tenth century, were read and performed during wayang kulit performances. True to their creative genius, the Malays did not simply translate these epics: they redacted and rewrote their own versions of the Ramayana, known to locals as *Hikayat Seri Rama*. Other innovative adaptations of these poems were entitled *Cerita Maharaja Wana* and *Cerita Kusi Serawi*, which were popular in Malaysia before the advent of Islam.[22]

One other interesting development during this era was the transformation of the idea of *Melayu* (Malay). By 644 CE, the word "Malayu" was already used by Chinese travelers to describe communities based in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. To be Malay in that milieu was to belong to a linguistic group that prided itself with a great empire connected to interregional trading networks. There is no evidence to show that Malayness was tied a given religion. From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, the term Malay gained more widespread prominence with the ascendance of King Adityawarman, a prince of the Majapahit empire whose seat of power lay in West Sumatra from 1347 till around 1375. He named his famous palace and kingdom Malayupura. "Malays" was slowly being recognized as a collective based in island Southeast Asia, sharing common heritage, language, and customs.[23]

That the Hindu-Buddhist phase in Malay history was significant for the Malays can be gleaned in local sources—stories known as hikayats. Although the earliest hikayats have been dated to the twelfth century, when Islam was gaining ground in many parts of Southeast Asia, these were not thoroughly Islamic in form and substance but were suffused with Hindu-Buddhist elements. The hikayats extolled the triumphs of Hindu-Buddhist rulers in ancient times while explaining how conversion to Islam made the Malays more enlightened and powerful. In truth, Srivijaya remained strong in the imagination of Malay-Muslim kings and chroniclers as the model kingdom to emulate.[24] Even so, we must be careful to not embellish the manifold achievements of the Malays under Hindu-Buddhist influence at the expense of later periods.

Colonial scholarship about the Malays is particularly guilty of this bias as evidenced in the orientalists' attempts to downplay the role of Islam in Malay life. The famous British scholar-administrator Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, as a case in point, spent much ink portraying Hindu-Buddhism as practiced by the Malays

as the binary opposite of and a faith superior to that of Islam. To him, Hindu-Buddhism brought forth an ideal social order and much advancement in the arts and sciences in comparison to the period when Islam became the predominant religion. These arguments were echoed by other European scholars who were enthralled by the ruins left behind by the Malay Hindu-Buddhists during the height of their power.[25]

Nor should we commit the error of some postcolonial scholars who, in turn, downplayed the significance of Hindu-Buddhist ideas to exaggerate the changes that Islam brought to the Malays—a form of orientalism in reverse.[26] The truth is actually somewhere in between. Hindu-Buddhist ideas transformed the Malays into a much-admired civilization known to the global world of its time. Upon accepting Islam, Malay Muslims built upon that legacy to create prominent states and polities, energetic scholarly and economic networks, and highly cultured societies that sustained Malay standing in an increasing connected world.

More crucially, unlike the Arabs who were engulfed in ignorance (*jahiliyya*) and were relatively backward when compared to the major civilizations surrounding them at the time when the Prophet Muhammad first preached Islam, the Malays were a highly sophisticated, formidable, polished, and refined group of people. Muslims from Arabia, India, China, and other seaborne empires who arrived at the shores of Malaysia during the height of the Hindu-Buddhist period encountered cosmopolitan and highly civilized societies ruled by kings and nobles who were deeply philosophical and who were endowed with a cultivated taste for the arts and a strong inclination to religiosity. Malays looked upon other faiths with an inclusive approach. They welcomed travelers, traders, merchants, and missionaries from all corners of the Muslim world to reside in their domains. This set the stage for Muslims to intermingle with the non-Muslim locals, and, soon enough, the migrant Muslims reshaped Malay beliefs in their own image.

Islamization: Incidental and Intentional

The infusion of Islam in Malaysia was not like the flood that engulfed the people of Noah, but the water analogy is still instructive. Islam came primarily from the oceans and seas. It came in streams and successive waves in a manner so subtle that the process took a few centuries to be discernible to outsiders. Unlike Noah's flood, Islam did not subside. It flowed into the cities and villages of Southeast Asia to a point that no one was left untouched by its presence. To explain the Islamization of the Malay world, both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have propounded various theories, each asserting that their explanations reflect the most precise postulation of how, why, and when Islam came and the people who purveyed it. It is timely to move beyond these contending positions and integrate

them into an entwined history of Islamization in Malay life. Here, I lean closer to Cesar Majul Adib, who maintained that a "judicious synthesis" of all theories of Islamization would bring us closer to a fuller appreciation of the spread of Islam in the Malay world.[27] I will divide my own story of the gradualist phase of Islamization into two parts: incidental Islamization and intentional Islamization. Both forms of Islamization should be seen as overlapping and mutually constitutive. Before going any further, it is perhaps useful to pause for a brief moment and keep in mind Marshall Hodgson's acute observations:

> In fact, Islam for Malaysia was the natural consequence of its position in the Afro-Eurasian zone as a whole. Malaysia lay at the crossroads of the Southern Seas. Its higher cultural life, from the time when civilization first came there, was ultimately adopted from the life of its ports. Yet these on the one hand remained somewhat apart from the life of the interior—never deeply rooted in local traditions, and on the other hand naturally remained open to the broad currents of culture from throughout the Southern Seas. When the dominant culture of merchants in those waters was Hindu or Buddhist, the port cities became Hindu and Buddhist, and eventually the hinterland followed them. As interregional trade gradually increased in volume and range, the Middle Eastern ports came to have a more pivotal role in the trade of all the Southern Seas; it was then the Middle Eastern culture which increasingly prevailed in the ports of those seas—especially in Malaysia. By the later Middle Ages this meant Islam. But the fundamental pattern of Malaysian life persisted; and it can be understood only in the context of the Afro-Eurasian civilized zone as a whole.[28]

Indeed, the oceans and seas changed the landscape of the largely Hindu-Buddhist Malay kingdoms. Malaysia's geographical position lying in between two waterways enabled Muslims globally to infuse the religion into that domain. On the east coast of Malaysia lay the South China Sea or "Nanhai," as the Chinese called it. Emissaries and traders from China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Brunei used this sea route to travel into Malaysia. This massive movement of people included Muslims who encountered Malays in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang, eventually winning them over into the fold of Islam.[29] The west coast of Malaysia was most exposed to Islamic influences. It lay along the Straits of Melaka, a gate into the sprawling Indian Ocean that had linked the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, southern Iraq and Iran, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, the Indonesian archipelago, and Malaysia into a connected matrix since the Hindu-Buddhist-animist period in Malay history. The Indian Ocean hub was

a nexus for the exchange of goods and ideas for many generations prior to the advent of Islam. With the rapid growth of the spice trace since the eighth century, Muslim missionaries from the Arab and Persian kingdoms and port cities traveled from coast to coast of the Indian Ocean to eventually introduce Islam to ordinary Malays.[30]

Oceans and seas were not the only paths that enabled Islam to enter into Malaysia. The Silk Road, a major overland route that linked empires in the Arab world, Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia was another avenue where Muslims traveled before finally setting foot in Malaysia. More than just a path where commercial activities took place, the Silk Road was utilized by Muslim traders to proselytize communities wherever they met them.[31] The climate in the overland, seas, and ocean routes governed the infusion of Islam in Malaysia. From May to October, the southwest monsoon facilitated the movement of ships from the Red Sea and India to the Far East. Traders would settle on the Straits of Melaka to sell their goods. Between November and April, the southeast monsoon aided the sailing of ships and junks from China down to parts of east and then west Malaysia to different ports along the Indian Ocean. Due to the dependence of traders and travelers on monsoons in determining their journeys and local ideas about the force of winds in influencing their lives, the Malay world was described as the *tanah dibawah angin* (land below the winds).[32] The tropical climate in Malaysia also meant that travelers and missionaries voyaged along the Silk Road at any time of year to escape the harsh winter conditions in their homelands. All year round, Muslims passed by and remained in various Malay states. Many eventually became part of the local societies. Such uninterrupted Muslim traffic and the establishment of Muslim settlements aided in the Islamization of the Malays.

A rough chronology is necessary here to capture the overall development of gradualist Islamization in Malaysia. The earliest Muslim encounters with the Malays began in 674, though no conversions were recorded. Thereafter, waves of Muslims from a variety of vocations and backgrounds landed on various coastal ports in Malaysia until the number of settlers grew and became visible in the ninth century in Sumatra and northern parts of the Malay Peninsula. Islam was established first in Perlak (or Peureulak) through the establishment of a Muslim kingdom in 840. A few decades later, the Sultanate of Samudra-Pasai was founded together with other sultanates in Pedir, Labri, and Aru. During a visit to Perlak in 1282, the Venetian traveler Marco Polo noted that the kingdom "is so much frequented by the Saracen [Arab] merchants that they have converted the natives to the Law of Mohammet."[33]

Similar to many other parts of the world, Islam entered into Malaysia through coastal cities and urban environments first and then the inland and

rural areas. By the early eleventh century, Islamization had gained momentum in the Malay Peninsula in view of the population's strong connections with Sumatra. In Pulau Tambun, Pahang, archaeologists discovered a Muslim tombstone at Permatang Pasir dated May 8, 1028 AD.[34] Kalah, also known as "Kedah" to the locals, was the first kingdom to convert to Islam. The spread of Islam coincided with the decline of the Srivijaya empire. The Hindu-Buddhist empire had been weakened by multiple raids by the Chola kingdom in India during the eleventh century and by the Mongols a century later. The Ayyutthaya kingdom in Thailand joined the fray in the decades that ensued in confronting many of the Malay states under Srivijaya's rule. With the loss of international trade with China, Srivijaya disintegrated in the opening of the fourteenth century.[35] The vacuum left by Srivijaya was soon filled by new Muslim kingdoms that propagated Islam in the region. The growth of these Muslim kingdoms coincided with the global spread of Islam in South Asia, the Mediterranean region, Southeast Europe, Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The fall of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 did not signal the contraction of Islam. The catastrophe paved the way for a new wave of Islamization as Muslim dynasties doubled the pace of converting their conquered subjects. A Muslim world system was in place, and Muslim kingdoms gained strength, support, and stimulus for being part of the expansive ummah.[36]

Incidental Islamization

Muslims who traveled into the Malay world did not necessarily come with the zeal to proselytize and the will to win more converts for the global ummah. Resources, rewards, and riches found in the many port cities in the region were among the pull factors. Still, the sheer presence of Muslims in the region, their material pursuits, and business transactions exposed the locals to what Islam stood for and what it meant to be a Muslim. I call such chanced infusion of Islam "incidental Islamization." It was incidental because most Muslims who came after the seventh century did not plan to effect any major transformations in Malay religious life. There was no blueprint, no grand strategy for conversion. There was no crusade sent from the seats of the caliphates to make Islam the dominant religion in the Malay world. But Muslim close encounters with Malay animists and Hindu-Buddhists paved way for dialogue, empathy, and understanding and, soon enough, transformation in the faith of the locals. This is not to say that Muslims who came from overseas did not intend to share Islamic teachings with the unconverted and the perplexed. Even if such intentions existed, Muslims did not make them the primary purpose of their journeys to the Malay world, as Anthony Johns has admonished us.[37]

Traders formed part of this story of incidental Islamization. They can be categorized into four main groups: Arabs, Persians, Indians, and Chinese. Recall that Arab traders engaged in trade with the Malays as far back as the first century. These Arabs were mainly pagans and Christians until the advent of Prophet Muhammad in 610 and were slowly converted to Islam. In the years after the demise of Prophet Muhammad in 633, successive Muslim caliphates accelerated the rate of conversions in the Arab world through alliances and conquests. Islam grew rapidly, according to John Esposito, because it "proceeded from a sense of mission, power, and superiority. Muslims were the dominant force—masters not victims, colonizers not the colonized. . . . It was a process of change characterized by continuity with the faith and practice of Muhammad."[38] The Arab Muslims knew of the existence of Southeast Asia from trading networks established during the pre-Islamic days. Conversion to Islam did not disrupt such links. Being Muslims actually further strengthened those connections.

The twelfth-century Arab geographer Muhammad Al-Idrisi (1100–1165) recorded that Sumatra and its neighboring areas were known to Arab traders and travelers as "Zabaj." The northern states of Malaya in turn were designated with effusive descriptions such as *Mamlakat al-Maharaja* translated as "the kingdom of the great ruler." Arab naming of places in the Malay world became part of the Malay cartographic vocabulary. One historical interpretation has it that Melaka, for example, was derived from the Arabic word "Mulaqah" which referred to a place where people from a variety of backgrounds met and engaged in commerce.[39] There were three streams of Arabs that traded in Malaysia and converted the locals via interactions and, more often, through marriage with Malay women. The first group were sent by the Umayyad dynasty that was centered in Damascus. They were dispatched in the mid-seventh century as ambassadors to Southeast Asia and established contact with a female ruler of Sumatra, Queen Sima. Some of these Arab Muslims stayed in the kingdom, establishing Islam's pioneering presence there.[40]

The second group of Arabs came from Hadramaut in Yemen. These Arabs belonged to the family of Prophet Muhammad and were distinguished by the title "Sayyids." They migrated after continuous persecution in Makkah and Iraq before eventually settling in Hadramaut to spread Islam there. Many Hadrami Arab Sayyids worked in partnership with other Arabs in their travels to Southeast Asia. They began their journeys from the Port of Aden to places such as Aceh and Barus in Sumatra and the Sulu Archipelago en route to various parts of Malaysia, where they traded and intermarried with the locals.[41] The third stream of Arab migrants took on the overland route traveling from the Arab world to Central Asia, China, India, and subsequently to different parts of Malaysia. These Arabs were said to have come from South Arabia, again largely from Hadramaut and

different provinces in Yemen. They lived for many decades in Guangzhou before fleeing along with other Persian Muslims in 874 to the Malay states to escape a massacre under the Tang dynasty. Yet even under dire persecution, the Arabs dominated trading in the South China Sea, and from there they brought merchandise and their faith to the Malay world.[42]

Like the Arabs, the Persians played a big part in commercial activities in Malaysia prior to the infusion of Islam in the area. They were among the carriers of Indic ideas adopted by the Malay kings and courts. Upon the Islamic conquests of the Sassanid Empire in 651, Islam rapidly became the majority religion of the Persians. Among the Persian Muslims were Shi'ites, an offshoot of Islam, who revered the Prophet's cousin, Ali. Marginalized by the Sunnis in the Abbasid-controlled lands, the Persian Shi'ites migrated to cities in China and India. From there, many Persian Muslim traders ventured to Malay states, notably Kedah. Patani was also the main stopping point for Persian ships from the eighth century onward. Persian traders intermarried with the local community in Patani and the northern states of Malaysia. So influential were Persians in the commercial life of Malay states that the Persian term *syahbandar* came to be used by the Malay elites to describe the harbor masters who managed and regulated trade from the Malay kingdoms from the thirteenth century onward.[43] In the areas of literature and scholarly writings, Persian-Indian influences were also evident. Malay court texts entitled *Taj-us-Salatin* (The Crown of Kings) and *Bustan-us-Salatin* (The Garden of Kings) were inspired by the Persian-Indian writings the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) and *Akbarnama* (Book of Akbar).[44]

Chinese Muslims were also among the ranks of traders, travelers, and migrants who brought Islam to Malaysia. Most Chinese Muslims who traveled to the region came from Yunnan and Canton. They were converted to Islam as early as the seventh century during the Tang dynasty, largely upon encounters with Arab and Persian missionaries. Many of these Chinese Muslims eventually rose up to high positions in predominantly non-Muslim kingdoms in Southeast Asia. As Geoff Wade explains: "What is particularly notable about the envoys from South East Asian ports to China during the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries are their names. The vast majority of them, according to the Chinese sources, bore a 'surname' either Li or Pu, followed by phonetic representations of names which are obviously Islamic."[45] The Chinese Muslims from Quangzhou were part of the lucrative ceramics trade that stretched to the far reaches of Southeast Asia. In exchange for such products, Chinese Muslims bartered and traded pepper, highly desirable in China, with the Malays. Chinese Muslims came to the Malay states via Champa and the Sulu Archipelago. In 977, a considerable Chinese presence was recorded in Borneo. Recovered gravestones indicate that Chinese Muslims were present in Brunei since 1264. These archaeological findings also suggest

that many of these traders might have settled and intermarried there. These Chinese Muslims were said to have traded with a nearby port in Kuala Berang, Terengganu.[46]

Equally significant during this phase of gradual Islamization of the Malays were Indian traders. Masters of commerce in the Indian Ocean littoral, they traced their origins from three regions: the Gujaratis from Northwest India, Malabaris (later on known as "Malayalees") from Malabar Coast in Southwest India, and the Chulias from the Coromandel Coast in Southeast India. Not all of the Gujaratis were Indians. Their ranks also consisted of Arabs, Turks, and Persians who upon marriage with the local women became indigenized Gujaratis. Marriage as a medium to widen trading networks was a common practice among the Gujaratis who shipped saltpeter, indigo, and cotton cloths in exchange for spices from the Malays.[47]

Indians from South India were especially prominent in the conduct of trade with Johor, Perak, Terengganu, and Kedah. Indeed, they formed the largest bulk of Indian Muslims who passed through Malaysia in search of wealth and opportunities. Their specialty was textiles. Many of these South Indian Muslims were appointed as *Saudagar Raja* (the King's Merchants) whose main task was to manage trade in the Malay states on the behalf of the Malay kings. Together with the Gujaratis, the South Indian Muslims imparted Islamic norms, beliefs, and values into societies. They also used trade as a pretext to bring Islamic scholars and missionaries from their homelands and the Middle East to Southeast Asia.[48]

In sum, Muslim traders, travelers, and migrants gave rise to the making of Muslim districts and communes peopled by creole Muslim communities in Malaysia. Through migration, marriage, and service rendered to societies and polities, they incidentally infused the message of Islam through their interactions with non-Muslims. But we must not forget the agency of the non-Muslims in the process of gradual Islamization. Coming from a syncretic Hindu-Buddhist-animist background and being historically cosmopolitan in their outlook and mindset, non-Muslims were open to new systems of belief that did not seem to radically alter their age-old customs and cultures. In pursuit of their own personal, strategic, and economic interests as they made dealings with Muslims, these non-Muslims eventually became Muslims or accepted the presence of Islam in their midst.

Intentional Islamization

If traders and travelers infused Islam incidentally without any declared aims to proselytize, neighboring Muslim kingdoms and the Sufis and scholars were, on the other hand, avowed in their missionizing objectives. For now, it is pertinent

to provide a rough sketch of the early kingdoms of the island Sumatra in bringing Islam to other parts of Malaysia. For these Islamizers, the Malay world was an open terrain to gain new adherents to Islam. The Malay rajas were aware that infusing Islam would add numbers to the ummah and, subsequently, expand their powers, positions, and military reach. After all, in the medieval Malay world, followership and manpower rather than land and institutions were the measurements of real power.[49] The Malay rajas controlled a large group of peasants, *debt-bondsmen* (orang berhutang), and *hamba abdi* (slaves) who worked on their plantations and ships under the supervision of local chiefs and merchants. These intentional Islamizers, however, employed different strategies than the traders and travelers to spread Islam. I will delve deeper into their contributions to Islamization and those of the Sufis and scholars in the chapters that follow.

Here, I would like to focus on Perlak and Pasai, two Muslim kingdoms that pioneered the infusion of Islam in the other Malay states. Perlak was situated in North Aceh and was reputed to be the earliest Malay kingdom to accept Islam in the ninth century. Upon conversion, the rulers of Perlak called upon Muslim scholars and missionaries in their cities, who mostly were Shi'ites from Persia. They taught the local community the basic tenets of Islam. These scholars and missionaries were also sent to proselytize the Malays across the Straits of Melaka. Perlak rulers were aware that one effective way to cripple the power of the reigning Srivijaya empire at that time was to win over as many Muslim converts as possible from the many small kingdoms under Srivijaya's wing.[50]

The fact that Shi'ism was a minority sect within Islam might have also motivated the Perlak rulers to double their efforts to convert the Malays. This competition became more intense during the reign of the third king, Sultan Alaiddin Sayyid Maulana Abbas Shah (888–913). Unlike his predecessors, Alaiddin held to Sunni beliefs and pursued the policy of curbing the influence of Shi'ism in his kingdom. But their differences were less ideological than a battle for power and supremacy. Sectarianism provided the most convenient rallying cry and mobilizing tool. Bitter wars between the two rivaling Malay elites led to the establishment of separate kingdoms within Perlak itself.[51] Both kingdoms sent scholars and missionaries to various Malay states in their strive to gain more followers. It is little wonder then that Malays in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula were most affected by the missionizing zeal of the Perlak kingdoms. Until the fifteenth century, upon the ascension of Melaka as a new Sunni-Islamic kingdom, these northern Malay states practiced a blend of Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. Many Malay-Muslim devotional practices, including the *Hari Ashura* (in remembrance of the day of Husayn, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, martyrdom) and honoring the middle month of *Sha'ban* (*Nisful Sha'ban*), were actually derived from Shi'ite beliefs. In many Malay hikayats written and read

aloud during this early period, constant references were made to the family of the Prophet, namely Ali, Fatimah, and Muhammad al-Hanifiyyah. These figures were couched in Shi'ite imagery and rhetoric.[52]

The kingdom of Pasai (also remembered as Samudra-Pasai or Samudera Darussalam) was also another competitor in the race to Islamize the Malay states. Founded in 1267 by Sultan Malikul Saleh (or Merah Silau, at other times referred to as "Merah Silu"), the Islamic kingdom lasted until 1521 and the invasion of the Portuguese. Malikul Saleh (whose fame and name is now memorialized in an airport at Banda Aceh) used the word "Samudera" to mean "the ocean or sea" in Sanskrit. This was a rhetorical strategy to make it known that his kingdom would rule the ocean and seas surrounding it. Malikul Saleh was unquestionably geared toward Islamizing what was left of the Srivijayan kingdom. He set the tone for the remaining rulers of the kingdom who infused Islam in the Malay states through several means: the display of grandeur, diplomatic relations, and *da'wah* (Muslim missionary activity).

The kings displayed themselves as larger than life in order to impress other Malay kingdoms with their magnificence and power that was realized only upon their conversion to Islam. Pasai rulers claimed to be descendants of great Abbasid kings in Baghdad, a great power recognized by Muslims and non-Muslims even after the devastating Mongol invasion in 1258.[53] The rulers also used Turkic and Mamluk titles and names. Through courts narratives and genealogies enmeshed with myths and legends, they gave the impression to surrounding polities of their Janus-faced outlook: religiously and politically entwined with the long history of the global ummah but determined to make a mark in regional and local arenas. Their projection of grandeur led many Malay Hindu-Buddhist kings to consider Islam a religion of choice in order to bolster their own prestige. This presentation of the royal self set the example for other Malay kings after their conversion to Islam.[54]

The Pasai rulers also built diplomatic relations with Hindu-Buddhist rulers in the Malay Peninsula. Through such relations, they encouraged Malay rulers to accept Islam. The conversion of Melaka in the early 1400s under Parameswara was a consequence of the diplomatic relations between the two kingdoms, as recorded in the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals).[55] Even if the rulers were not keen to accept Islam, diplomatic relations provided a safe passage for scholars and missionaries to preach to the Hindu-Buddhist communities in the Malay states. To be sure, scholars and missionaries from different parts of the Muslim world received patronage from the king. The *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (The Story of the Kings of Pasai), a local history of Pasai written in the early modern period, stated that the kings of Pasai were patrons of religious learning and emphasized on the importance of enjoining good and battling evil in order to cement the glory of

Islam.[56] The famous Arab traveler, Ibn Battuta (1304–1377), underlined this in his observations during his visit to Pasai under Malikul Saleh:

> The learned are admitted to his society, and hold free converse with him while he proposes questions for their discussion. He is a great hero for the faith; and so humble, that he walks to his prayers on the Friday. He is too strong for his infidel neighbours; they therefore pay tribute to him.[57]

By the fourteenth century, Pasai was a nerve center of Muslim *halaqahs* (study circles) that mushroomed and swelled in many mosques found in the kingdom. Local, Persian, Arab, and Indian scholars led these study circles and turned these sessions into training grounds for missionaries before they were sent to the Malay states to evangelize the locals. It was also through the collaboration of the kings and scholars of Pasai that the Jawi script was introduced as a means to acquaint the Malays with the Arabic script in place of the Pallava script. Another hybrid language was invented, infused with Arabic and Persian words. Through religious treatises, tales, and poetry, Pasai scholars and writers made Jawi the medium of conversion and a new lingua franca of Malaysia in the years to come.[58]

Coastal cities and towns were more predisposed to Islam that came from Sumatra than the inland areas because most Muslim traders, travelers, scholars, and missionaries were settled there. This was a development that mirrored other places outside Southeast Asia in that Islamization "begins with the cities, among the more cosmopolitanly minded. Only gradually does it [Islam] spread into the countryside."[59] For this reason, the earliest Malay kingdoms that embraced Islam during the gradualist period were Kedah and Terengganu because these states were actively engaged in trade with Sumatra. By the tenth century, tombstones belonging to Arab Muslims were already found in Kedah, with one named after Syaikh Abdul Al-Qadir ibn Syaikh Husain Syah, who died on 903. In 1071, a mosque was built in Mount Jerai.[60] It was only in 1136 that the first king of Kedah eventually accepted Islam through the work of Sayyids. He changed his name from Maharaja Derbar Raja II to Sultan Muzaffar Syah, adopting the names and titles of Persian rulers at that time. This and other episodes relating to the gradual Islamization of Kedah was recorded in a literary work, the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Kedah Annals), written in the eighteenth century.[61] The ruler's conversion meant that the *rakyat* (masses) followed suit decades later. That the early Muslim rulers called Kedah *Darul Aman* (Abode of Peace) showed their avowed aim of establishing friendly relations with neighboring kingdoms, Muslim or non-Muslim. The kingdom's trade in cinnamon, camphor, gold, rattan, ivory, and many forest products flourished under Islamic rule. Kedah was also known for its production and export of fine swords.[62]

The Terengganu stone discussed in the beginning of this chapter provides us with evidence that Islamic laws were already enforced in that kingdom in the early fourteenth century, even though scholars are still divided over the exact dating of the inscriptions on the stone. It is a fragment of history that reveals the genius of the Malays during that period and their acute capacity to amalgamate Sanskrit and Islamic elements while asserting their own unique local identities. The Almighty God, for example, was written as "Dewata Mulia Raja" on the Terengganu stone rather than the Arabic "Allah Ta'ala," possibly to appeal to the sensibilities of the newly converted Malays.[63] Oral accounts and stories have it that a Muslim king ruled Terengganu since the twelfth century. There is, however, no concrete evidence to support this claim. As a former vassal state of Srivijaya, an ally of Pasai and, by the fifteenth century, a protectorate of the Melakan Sultanate, Terengganu's Islamization was as gradual as Kedah, with Hindu-Buddhist ideas having a strong hold on the minds of the people as they slowly incorporated and internalized Islamic beliefs.[64] Pahang and Kelantan followed suit, joining the ranks of Muslim kingdoms toward the closing years of the gradualist phase of Islamization.[65] The exhuming of hundreds of gravestones called "Batu Aceh" (Acehnese Stones) in these states that dated back as early as the tenth century provides more evidence that the kingdoms of Pasai and Perlak did assert a certain degree of influence on these Malay states.[66]

The adoption of Islam by these Malay states must also be seen against the Islamization of the Southeast Asia as a whole, for developments in the region did have an effect in encouraging states and surrounding societies to consider Islam their religion of choice and conscience. In 1380, an Arab trader by name of Syaikh Karimul Makhdum preached Islam in the Sulu Archipelago and other parts of what came to be the Philippines. He gained many converts within a short period and established a mosque in his name. The Syaikh Karimul Makhdum mosque was the center for missionary activities. Manila became the capital of a Muslim kingdom established in the fifteenth century. Syaikh Makhdum sent his son, Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who along with other Sufi preachers introduced Islam in Java, Indonesia. Although Muslims had already established colonies in various parts of Java since the eleventh century, it was only upon the arrival of Maulana Malik Ibrahim and the Sufis that the pace of Islamization accelerated.[67]

Be it through incidental or intentional means, a common factor that binds these processes of Islamization of Malaysia was gradualism. Much of the population of Malaysia remained animists and Hindu-Buddhists even after their brethren embraced Islam. These communities lived harmoniously side by side. The belief in spirits of all kinds, ceremonial feasts in the events of birth and death called *kenduri selamat*, and the idea of divine kings were some of the pre-Islamic beliefs and practices that lived on even after the infusion of Islam. As such, the

argument made by some scholars that the coming of Islam to Malaysia was a "revolution from within" is true only from the fourteenth century onward when Islam changed the mindset of the Malays incorporate more fully the "Tawhidic worldview" (the idea of the Oneness of God). From then on, Islam was the ideological frame of reference for the Malays as they worked alongside other communities to develop a civilization that was both technologically and spiritually powerful.[68] When Islam came to the Malay world, as Willem F. Wertheim writes, it:

> gave the small man a sense of individual worth as a member of the Islamic community. According to Hindu ideology, he was merely a creature of lower order than the members of the higher castes. Under Islam he could, as it were, feel himself their equal, or even, in his quality as a Moslem, the superior of such of them as were not Moslem themselves, even though he still occupied a subordinate position in the social structures.[69]

As more and more Muslims grew to accept Islam, the rulers followed suit, be it for pragmatic reasons or because of their inner convictions of the true teachings of Islam. Court texts were written to make listeners believe that many Malay rulers became Muslim through supernatural means under the influence of men of spiritual prowess. Let us now turn to such mystical stories of conversion to Islam and examine how Sufis and Sufism touched the hearts of the Malays.

2

Sufis, Sufism, and Conversion Narratives

WHENEVER THE WORDS "Sufis" and "Sufism" are mentioned today, the images that come to mind are swirling dervishes and pious wanderers dressed in tattered robes. Such has been the portrayal of an influential strand of thought and practice within Islamic history and society. Sufis are seen as otherworldly, world-renouncing Muslims. Their love for the divine and their longing for the hereafter have made them strangers to world. They are aloof to the problems of everyday life. They are uninterested in pomp, power, and positions. Sufis, from this limited perspective purveyed by generations of European orientalism, is a collective akin to Catholic mystics, Buddhist monks, and Jain ascetics.[1] Such imagery seldom held true for Sufis in historical Southeast Asia.

Sufis were not merely wandering souls in search of the hereafter. After the fall of the Abbasid empire in Baghdad in 1258, Sufi scholars and brotherhoods took it upon themselves to keep the universal message of Islam alive by bringing the wealth of knowledge, expertise, and experience they have accumulated to the other parts of the Muslim world.[2] They became agents of societal, political, economic, and religious change. Sufis served as physicians for the common people, offering cures for all sorts of spiritual and physical ailments. Sufis were appointed as advisors to kings and nobles, admonishing them in matters pertaining to diplomacy and politics just as they were instrumental in infusing spirituality into the courts and lives of the powerful. So influential were the Sufis that they were able to assert their influence upon many port cities in Southeast Asia, transforming these hubs of trade and commerce into staging areas for the training and dispatch of missionaries. Through their proselytizing efforts, the Buddhist polity in Sumatra and the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit in Java were severely weakened, paving the way for the creation of Muslim sultanates in Southeast Asia.[3] At the peak of its power and influence in the seventeenth century, Aceh was described by historians as being in "the epoch of Sufis."[4]

According to an influential Malaysian-Islamic scholar Naquib Al-Attas:

> Muslim missionary activity was carried out at different levels, according to different techniques, depending upon the different cultural traits of the peoples they strove to convert. . . . These different levels in which Islam was conveyed according to the different spiritual and intellectual capacities of the various missionaries were gradually 'standardized', as it were, by the saints or *Walis* and *Sufis*, the scholars and learned doctors of rational theology (ulama) and of jurisprudence (fuqaha) and their disciples (sing. murid) among the missionaries who in structural pattern somewhat similar to the schema traced in genealogical tables (sing. silsilah) transmitted and clarified the teachings to their disciplines and followers right down to and among the masses of the people.[5]

It is perhaps not excessive to argue that due to the work of the Sufis, by the end of the sixteenth century Malaysia was drenched with Sufistic influences and ideas. Sufi traces were found in court texts, fables, songs, and poetry. Sufistic practices were present in Malay cultural and religious activities, in the conduct of feasts and festivities. Sufi motifs also shaped Malay arts and architecture. To be a Malay-Muslim was to be Sufi, by default.[6]

This chapter proceeds in three overlapping circles. I examine the approaches, methods, and tools that the Sufis used to purvey Islam in Malaysia and to win over Malays to the Islamic faith. Although many examples of Sufi da'wah given here are drawn from various parts of Southeast Asia and not only Malaysia per se, we can safely speculate that similar missionary methods were used to bring more converts into the Islamic fold. Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, the South Philippines, among other areas, were, in fact, a shared terrain during the premodern period. The Sufis capitalized on the fuzzy borders and fluid sense of territory among the Malay kingdoms to expand the reach of the Islamic message between these domains. Their adroit mobility, traveling alongside traders and wayfarers, enabled the creation of multiple bases of missionary work in Southeast Asia, each linked to and strengthening one another in the path of making Islam popular among Malays. Indeed, the activities of the Sufis, much like the history Islam in Malaysia, were entwined between the global and the local, between the state and society, between the scholarly and popular, and between Muslims and non-Muslims.[7]

Following that, I focus on selected texts that bring to light the conversion of Malays to Islam. These conversion narratives were colored with Sufi vocabulary, allegory, and cosmology. They tell us of the mystical and paranormal reasons as to why Malay rulers came to accept Islam. Such conversion narratives were powerful in persuading the Malay masses that the adoption of Islam by the rulers was an

act of pure sincerity or sudden epiphany and not driven by the will to power or the love for wealth and glory, or both. These conversion narratives showed that Islam came to the Malay rulers via circumstances and conditions that were out of the ordinary, occurrences that no other average person would have the privilege to experience. Be it through encounters with the Prophet Muhammad himself, through the work of legendary saints, or chance discoveries of Islamic sacred texts, Malay conversion narratives impressed upon their readers and listeners that Islam came to the Malay rulers in mysterious ways, that being Muslim was not a matter of choice. It was a matter of destiny and part of God's master plan for the Malays.

Sufi Innovative Da'wah *(Preaching) Methods*

How can a largely non-Muslim and highly cultured group of people be drawn to accept the message of Islam? What are the best approaches that can be employed to make them feel that Islam is not a religion that would totally undo their previous beliefs and practices? These must have been some of the many questions in the back of the minds of the Sufis as they embarked on the quest of infusing Islam in Malaysia and Southeast Asia in general. From the extant sources we have so far, it is clear that three branches of Sufism were operating in the region from the eleventh century on. Each of these appealed to different Malay audiences, and they would even, at times, come into conflict with one another. These branches were, of course, not necessarily distinct from one another. The Sufis from one branch might engage in the methods of infusing Islam used by other branches as well.

The first branch was populist Sufism. This variant of Sufism was highly sensitive to and adaptive of local beliefs, practices, and temperaments. Populist Sufis were master synthesizers, experts in the melding of local practices with Islamic rituals, the fusion of local myths with Muslim stories, and combining local beliefs with Qur'anic and Prophetic injunctions. In short, they heralded a "mystic synthesis" that remained a permanent feature of Islam in the Malay world for many centuries.[8] Populist Sufis utilized a number of tools, among which was the use of magical and supernatural powers to spread Islam. They performed miraculous acts such as healing the sick through reading passages from the Islamic scriptures, taught special chants for one to achieve the state of invulnerability, and gave out amulets that promised protection against the *jinn* (unseen beings). Through the use of these healing techniques and protective instruments that were often garbed with Arabic and Qur'anic idioms, the populist Sufis appealed to the Malays who were already predisposed to paranormal beliefs. Sufism was thus vernacularized and couched as but a newer and Islamic version of shaman practices that the

Malays already believed in. To further expand their influence, many of these populist Sufi magicians and healers led *kebatinan* (search for inner truth) movements that incorporated aspects of *kejawen* (Javanism). The kebatinan movements called for the cleansing of the *kejiwaan* (inner soul) and viewed themselves as an *aliran kepercayaan* (stream of thought) within the fold of Islam. Some of these kebatinan groups were, however, deemed by shari'a-minded Muslims as heretical in promoting the worship of the graves of *wali* (saints) and mixing Islamic practices with pre-Islamic devotions.[9]

The populist sufis also put the arts to good use to subtly introduce Islam to locals. The *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet play), *dikir barat* (lyrical verse debate), and *gamelan* music so popular in the Malay world prior to the advent of Islam were the mediums most effectively utilized. The *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints of Java) were perhaps the earliest to use the *wayang kulit* as missionizing tools, and their disciples continued the practice to using other performance and musical ensembles. The Wali Songo and their followers "held that when people do not feel challenged in their old habits, the elements of Islamic doctrine can seep in slowly and surely."[10] Their efforts proved successful, and Islamicized versions of wayang kulit soon mushroomed in other parts of Southeast Asia, including Malaysia. As for *dikir barat*, this lyrical performing art originated from southern Thailand and was originally performed during times of harvest during the Hindu-Buddhist period. Populist Sufis and other missionaries capitalized on dikir barat, transforming its substance while maintaining much of the form to transmit Islamic values and beliefs. In Kelantan and the rest of northern Malaysia, Islam flourished partly due to the arts that the locals identified with and the infusion of Islamic values and norms through the use of artistic engravings such as the Terengganu Stone (See Figure 2.1).[11]

The second branch of Sufism was metaphysical in nature. The Malay-Indonesian scholar and historian Hamka termed this branch of Sufism *tasauf filsofis* (philosophical Sufism). By this Hamka meant "a form of philosophical inquiry that sought to unravel the barrier between the outer and inner aspects of life. The search for what was veiled [from the sense perception of human beings]."[12] Arab-Persian Sufis like Mansur Al-Hallaj (858–922), Abu Bakar Ibn al-Arabi (1076–1148), Abdul Karim Al-Jili (1366–1424), and Al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (1154–1191) were among the figures who spearheaded this strain within Sufism. These Sufis were influenced by Neoplatonism, as well as by mystical ideas emanating from Persia, India, and the Christian world. They promoted the notion of *Wahdatul Wujud*, which connoted the unity between God and humankind, as well as the concept of *Nur Muhammad* (The Light of Muhammad), or *Alhaqiqatul Muhammad* (The Essence of Muhammad), through their prose, poetry, and treatises.

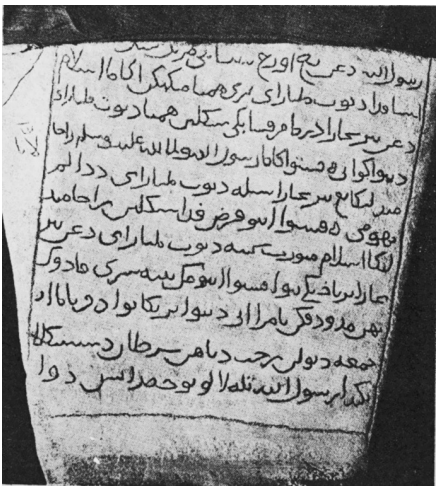


FIGURE 2.1 The Terengganu Stone

The most prominent among the philosophical Sufis in the Malay world was Hamzah Fansuri (?–1590). He was not the earliest Sufi to expound philosophical ideas in the Malay world, but he was the first to textualize such thoughts in rhythmic poems that earned him the status of the "First Malay Poet" and the progenitor of Malay *syair* (rhythmic four-line stanzas). Very little is known about his early life, and his origins have been much disputed among historians. What is clear is that he was born in north Sumatra at a place called Barus and was a well-traveled man acquainted with the Arab world, India, and parts of Southeast Asia before settling in Aceh. Hamzah's Sufistic cum pantheistic ideas gained him much followership in Aceh and in other Malay states in Malaysia. Together with his loyal student, Syamsuddin Al-Sumatrani, these philosophical Sufis introduced Ibn Arabi's (1165–1240) doctrine of *Wahdatul Wujud* (Unity of Being) and founded the *Wujudiyyah* (existential monists) brotherhood among the Malays, much to the ire of the mainstream ulama who regarded the brotherhood's ideology as veering too closely toward pantheism.[13]

The influence that these philosophical Sufis enjoyed in the Malay community—be it among Muslims or non-Muslims—has much to do with the beauty of words, metaphors, and allegories used in their writings, which the common people could easily understand. Hamzah stood at the pinnacle in the arts of infusing Islam through the power of sublime language. He expressed his personal worries, visions, and experiences to convey the sweetness of Islam as a faith according to which he abided. He used the examples of sailing ships and boats, of women coloring and weaving cloth, and even sexual imageries to gain

his readers' attention to the presence of Allah and his role in the world of human beings. An example of his fine use of rhythmic prose is:

> *Vacate your heart*
> *So as to become the Sublime Ocean*
> *When the wind dies down, the waves disappear*
> *You return to the sea of the Living One, the Eternal.*
> *The great Sea is shoreless*
> *Majesty and Beauty are everywhere*
> *Do not plunge into it on the left*
> *Know perfectly how to conduct yourself.*[14]

Such words appealed to the maritime Malay world where women were held in high regard and where the divine was regarded as omnipresent, always attentive to the affairs of man. Because of this unique style of expressing Islam and Sufism, his writings invited commentaries and reflections from disciples and admirers, friends and detractors. Hamzah's works traveled quickly during his lifetime and soon thereafter beyond the shores of Aceh to the Malay Peninsula and Java before they were banned and burned in the wake of a *fatwa* (religious edict) issued by another Sufi scholar, Nuruddin Al-Raniri (?–1658).[15] Of Hadrami Arab origins, Al-Raniri was born in Gujerat and traveled to Pahang before finally settling in Aceh to serve in as the advisor and, subsequently, *Syaikh al-Islam* (Authority of Islam) under Sultanah Safiatuddin Tajul Alam (1612–1675). His prodigious scholarship covering areas of universal history, statecraft, theology, ethics, jurisprudence, and Islamic mysticism earned him the reputation of being the most original thinker among the scholastic Sufis of the seventeenth century.[16]

To be sure, the scholastic Sufis such as Al-Raniri formed a third branch of Sufism in the Malay world. Many came from the Arab world, Persia, and India and were polymaths. They taught new converts the rudiments of Islam and to expand the membership of their *tariqas* (Sufi brotherhoods). In time, many local Malays became Sufi scholars in their own right. Together, these scholastic Sufis brought about the rise of rationalism and intellectualism, which, in effect, revolutionized "the Malay-Indonesian worldview, turning it away from a crumbling world of mythology . . . to the world of intelligence, reason and order."[17] The scholastic Sufis were equally instrumental in bringing Malay states closer to a shari'a-centered Islam. The earliest known scholastic Sufi who lived during the thirteenth-century Malay world was Abu Abdullah Mas'ud Al-Jawi. As with Hamzah Fansuri, the dearth of biographical sources has made it difficult for historians to reconstruct his life story. The moniker "Al-Jawi," however, indicates that he originated from

the Malay world, most likely from the island Java. He rose to the ranks of the *shuyukh* (eminent scholars) in the port of Aden in Yemen and became one of the leaders of the Qadiriyya Sufi order there. Al-Jawi's students disseminated the breadth of knowledge they gained from their master in ports and villages across the Indian Ocean, including Southeast Asia. One of his closest students was "Abd Allah bin As'ad al-Yafi'i (1298–1367), whose works were widely read in Southeast Asia. al-Yafi memorialized his teacher's name, piety, and scholarship through a longue duree history of Islam up to his time.[18]

Together with Nuruddin Al-Raniri, Abdul Rauf al-Sinkili (1615–1693), and Yusuf al-Maqassari (1626–1699), to name a few, these scholastic Sufis formed networks that flowed into and out of mosques, suraus and *pondoks* (village boarding schools) in Malaysia. As Azyumardi Azra has deftly described, the vibrant networks of scholastic Sufis fulfilled different functions in the shaping of Islam in the world. They aided in the expansion of the Islamic faith in the region. They complemented the work of other Sufis, traders, kings, and missionaries of Islam. Above all, they focused their energies and writings on the project of *tajdid* and *islah* (renewing and reforming) of the teachings and practice of Islam. As explained earlier, since the eleventh century, many aspects of Islam in Malaysia had been influenced by Shi'ism and the blending of Islam with pre-Islamic cultures and faiths. By the fifteenth century, the scholastic Sufis intervened in the Islamization process, calling the masses into the fold of a reformed Sunni Islam. They critiqued syncretic practices that contravened Islamic laws. The scholastic Sufis participated in holy battles against non-Muslim kingdoms and resisted European colonialism. They led rebellions at the expense of their own lives. Indeed, Sufis did more than bring Islam to Malaysia, they were among the toughest defenders of the faith.[19]

Amidst their differences, these three groups of Sufis shared a few commonalities. At the most basic level, all of them belonged to Sufi orders that originated from the Arab world, Africa and South Asia. The Sufi orders that have a strong following in different Malay states included, among others, the Naqsyabandiyya, Qadariyya, Shattariyya, Samaniyyah-Khawatiyya, Tijaniyya, Dusuqiyya-Burhaniyya, Ahmadiyya-Idrisiyya, Shadhiliyya, Chistiyya, and Alawiyya. Each of these tariqas established its own educational as well as religious institutions. They were active missionizers of the societies around them and were bound together by the pledge of *bai'ah* (loyalty) to the *murshids* (spiritual guides). All of these Sufis sought to the gain the support of the power elites in the Malay society to ensure the vitality and expansion of their movements. In many Malay states, rajas were initiated into the tariqas and made bai'ah to the murshids. The rajas were also influential in supporting Sufi murshids and scholars to write religious treatises that were taught in mosques and religious schools in the region.[20]

The Sufis were also involved in direct communication with the common people, be it Muslim or non-Muslim. They were not armchair critiques of society, or reclusive contemplatives, who isolated themselves from the problems of the ordinary people. They were active participants in the politics, economics, social life, and religious landscapes of Malaysia, through discourses and activism to initiate change and to enhance the order of things. But this change, as many Sufis had it, had to be achieved in the most gradual of ways and in a manner that would not upset the harmony and balance in local societies. The Malay habit of consuming alcohol, for example, was not openly prohibited until two centuries or so after arrival of Islam in Malaysia. Up until the seventeenth century, Western travelers to Sumatra noted that the Muslims they encountered were still fond of distilling and drinking alcohol despite their knowledge of its prohibition in Islam. As for dress, until the onset of reformist Islamization, Malay women generally did not cover their heads. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims persisted for generations even when the shari'a was enforced in the Malay-Islamic kerajaan.[21] The Sufis prioritized the local understanding of the divine and of values in Islam before calling upon the Malays to adhere to religious laws and ethical codes. Their gentle predisposition and ability to relate to Malays from all walks of life, from kings to warriors to the layman, made the message of Islam they brought with them alluring and easily accepted by all.[22]

Finally, Sufis from all three branches were keen promoters of the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence, the Asharite theology, and the ethical mysticism of Al-Ghazali. They made these streams of legal, philosophical, and theological thought pervasive among the Malays. [23] One may ask: Why did the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence become more dominant than other schools such as the Hanafi school when Indians and Persians who were Hanafis also brought Islam into the Malay world? There were a few plausible reasons for this. Although Islam came from many parts of the world with differing ideologies, it was the Hadrami Arabs and other groups who shared their intellectual heritage that gained an upper hand in influencing the Malays. The intensity and creative proselytizing techniques of the Hadrami Arabs coupled with their willingness to integrate easily into the local community eased the infusion of Shafi'i, Asharite, and Ghazalian ideas they subscribed to. Furthermore, Muslim scholars that believed in these schools of thought left the greatest number of written works and founded the greater share of religious and educational institutions. The spread and dominance of Shafi'i, Asharite, and Ghazalian ideas occurred through the relentless circulation of religious treatises, the growing number of schools and seminaries, and the missionary activities that carried these ideas.[24]

It is perhaps then reasonable to posit that the Sufis who came to Malaysia were "glocalised" in their outlook. They embedded themselves into the local

societies while addressing local concerns. At the same, the Sufis maintained strong connections with global Sufi brotherhoods through *ziarah* (visits) to holy shrines, schools, and colleges overseas and meetings with fellow scholars based across the Indian Ocean and beyond. They preserved as well as memorized the *silsila* (chain of spiritual descent) as well as *tabaqat* (biographies) of founders of Sufi orders and masters. These visits and the texts that bound the various Sufis based at different edges of the world created a sense of community among the Malay members of the *tariqas*, that they were all part of the spiritual ummah whose hearts were dedicated to serving God and humankind.[25]

Among the tariqas that stood out was the Tariqa Alawiyya. Founded in the early thirteenth century by Muhammad bin Ali (or more commonly known as al-Faqih al-Muqaddam [1178–1255]) and sustained by subsequent generations of Sayyids who traced their lineages to the Prophet Muhammad, this Sufi brotherhood became predominant throughout the coasts of the Indian Ocean, thanks to the active missionary activities of its faithful adherents.[26] In time, the Tariqa Alawiyya made headway in Malaysia. Sufi scholars and saints from this tariqa were fondly called *habib* (plural *habaib*, "beloved ones"). On many occasions, these scholars and saints took on important positions in the Malay states, from serving as advisers to kings, *muftis* (expounder of Islamic laws), *qadis* (judges), and religious teachers. Their versatility in social life coupled with their charisma and networks enabled members of the Tariqa Alawiyya to infuse Islam more effectively that other missionaries that came before them. In point of fact, many of the habaib were leaders of rebellions against the *kafir* (unbelievers) when the rights of Muslims and Islamic kingdoms came under the threat from rival polities and Western colonialism.[27] Their deeds and thoughts were not left undocumented. They made their way in the *hikayats* (Malay courtly texts), structuring the manner in which kings and nobles narrated their conversion to Islam.

Conversion Narratives

Written as early as the eleventh century, these hikayats were connected to one another, either by way of direct references to the same events or figures or in the ways in which the plots unfolded. The author of *Sejarah Melayu*, according to Teuku Iskandar, "must have known the three important Malay works of those days, the *Hikayat Iskandar Dzulkarnain*, the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* and the *Tajus-Salatin*."[28] All of these texts emphasized the virtues of kings, their genealogies, success, and failings as well as the part played by mythical figures, prophets, warriors, saints, missionaries, and nobles in the making of great Malay kingdoms. The primary function of these texts was as guides for kings to be the embodiment of justice. The hikayats also served as admonitions to would-be rulers to live up to

God's commandment to be compassionate toward their subjects while displaying piety, chivalry, wisdom, and generosity to ensure the prosperity of their kingdoms. These texts were written in a didactic style to impress upon masses the necessity of being loyal to their rulers. In the hikayats, *derhaka* (treason) was the most serious of crimes, subject to death in the most gruesome manner in the afterlife.[29] More pertinent here, all of these texts provide crucial information about how the Malay kings desired their conversion stories to be told and how they used fabulous accounts to impress upon the non-Muslim public that the kings' conversions were inimitable and memorable. Even though such conversion narratives do not imply the Islamization of the entire populace, they do provide us with windows into how Sufism and Sufis played major roles in aiding the infusion of Islam in Malaysia. [30] Vladimir Braginsky drives home this point, stating: "Apparently Sufism influenced Malay literature to an extent similar to that to be observed in Middle-Eastern literature or in the Muslim literature of India with their innumerable examples of allegories describing spiritual journeys."[31]

It is therefore unsurprising that in these conversion narratives, the kings were usually the first to be converted to Islam, followed by their subjects. The narration of the rulers' abrupt and unexpected shift in faith, usually by way of dream visions and encounters with holy men, was no doubt a derivative of hagiographical Sufi literature.[32] No exact dates were given about when these watershed conversions of kings took place. This is barely surprising—Malays would have already been exposed to Islam before the kings readily accepted the religion. The conversion narratives masked such realities on the ground to underline the dominant idea that kings stood at the apex of the society. Since the king was the embodiment of kingdom and the prime protector of the faith, all narratives of Malay conversion to Islam must begin with him and less some other lesser mortal. In an era when myths and facts were treated by the common man with equal importance and where kings wielded the power of ideology, the point was not to show when exactly Malays converted to Islam, for that would downplay the king's importance. Rather, the hikayats propounded impactful storylines that revealed, even if in fallacious and partial ways, how the conversion of kings changed the history of the Malays forever.

The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (also known as *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*) is one of the few conversion narratives to be examined here. It was a model or a template for all other Malay-Islamic hikayats produced in the centuries to come. Commissioned by a ruler in Sumatra in the mid-fourteenth century, the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* was influential throughout the Malay world because Muslims regarded Pasai as the Islamic state that shaped the language and culture of the region. It was a text that became part of the oral culture and living tradition of the Malays. The stories in it were refashioned and recast as they traveled from Sumatra and were

presented to new audiences in the rest of Malaysia. An ensemble of stories, the episodes, characters, themes, and lessons in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* were often repeated in other courtly texts found in the Malay world, bearing evidence of the intense intellectual interaction among the Malays and between Malays and the rest of world from the eleventh century till the eve of colonial rule. The hikayats' references to Indian, Chinese, Arab, and European kingdoms and personas show how globalized and global-oriented the Malays were during those times.[33] So how did the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* narrate the conversion of the Malays, and what aspects of Sufism were found in it?

The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* told that a ruler of Pasai, Malikul Saleh, was the earliest to accept Islam and that he pioneered the propagation of Islam throughout the Malay world. No date was given for this landmark event.[34] This notwithstanding, projecting the image of being the first convert and the first Islamizer in that context was ingenious, because it cemented the image of foresight that Pasai rulers had then. They parted ways with age-old traditions in an era when Hindu-Buddhism was the prevailing norm, culture, and religion of the Malays. They were also strategic to have made the shift to Islam because, armed with the spirit of the new faith and the connections to Muslim empires that came with it, the Pasai rulers were able to build a mighty polity with influence and power that stretched beyond its predecessor. The hikayat thus presented the first Muslim king of Pasai as a pathfinder, a trailblazer par excellence, who turned what was once a sea of disbelievers into committed followers of Islam. But that depiction begs the question: Why did Islam arrive first in Pasai and not elsewhere in the region?

The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* answers this question by bringing its readers back to the Messenger of God: the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad, according to the hikayat, knew of the Pasai's existence and fame, more commonly known to the Arabs by its pre-Islamic name, "Samudera." Here, the author of the text emphasized the significance of Samudera for the Prophet. It was the Prophet who knew of Samudera and not the other way around. It follows then that Samudera was not just one of many places that the Muhammad had some information about. It was a site that the founder of Islam envisioned as a hub of Islamization in a region located far away from the house of Islam. Encouraged by this premonition, the Prophet then instructed his companions: "once news about that land becomes known (to you), order a ship filled with courtly items and enjoin the people of that land to embrace Islam followed by the recitation of the declaration of faith." The Prophet's orders did not end there. He prophesized that, upon accepting Islam, Samudera would eventually be honored by the presence of *wali Allah* (saints of Allah). [35]

Another hallmark characteristic of the kingdom emerges from this account. Samudera (later Pasai) was not only the first kingdom in the Malay world to accept

Islam, but the first Muslim—Muhammad—had placed Pasai in a special place in his prophecy as a domain where God's religion would flourish. No authoritative book other than the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* can verify whether the Prophet actually mentioned Samudera during his lifetime. Ismail Hamid explains that this was one of the defining features of the hikayats. Fabricated sayings of the Prophet and his companions were often included in these texts without proper reference to where these words were drawn from. Fabricated sayings were powerful nonetheless as they bolstered the legitimacy of Muslim kings in the eyes of local audiences. Samudera's conversion to Islam was not an accident or chance encounter or a consequence of the conversion of other kingdoms in the Malay world. It was, in no uncertain terms, a fulfillment of the Prophetic vision.[36] Samudera was destined to be the first Muslim kingdom and to be a kingdom of many firsts. [37]

Islam was not brought to Samudera by the Prophet, his companions, or anyone of that generation, according to the hikayat. The task was left to a Sufi preacher, Syaikh Ismail, who hailed from Makkah. But before Syaikh Ismail reached Samudera, the king, Merah Silau, encountered the Prophet in a long and graphic dream. It was through this encounter with the Prophet that the king was initially converted to Islam and achieved feats like no other. The Prophet cupped his chin, closed his eyes, then spat something sweet into his mouth. The Prophet then taught the king the declaration of faith, admonished him to eat only meat slaughtered in the halal way, and informed him of the coming of Syaikh Ismail in forty days' time, who would instruct him about Islam. He was no longer to be known as Merah Silau but was given by the Prophet a new name and title, Sultan Malikul Saleh. When Malikul Saleh woke up, he was miraculously circumcised. Nor was this all. He was also able to read all of the Qur'an, much to the amazement of his subjects. By the time Syaikh Ismail arrived in Samudera, he had met a king who was proficient in everything that the Prophet had taught him in the dream. Syaikh Ismail's task then was not to convert the already Islamized ruler but to infuse Islam among the ministers, warriors, and the masses, who embraced the faith unquestioned. To propound the conversion of the kingdom as a pivotal moment in the history of Samudera, the hikayat narrated the coronation of the first Islamic king, who was dubbed the founder of a flourishing kingdom.[38]

Sufi influences are most apparent in this conversion narrative. Dreams of encounters and deriving wisdom from the Prophet, according to Carl Ernst, are an important part of Sufi mystical experience. "There were even some Sufis who specialized in the talent of producing dreams of the Prophet for others, in this way democratizing access to the source of spirituality."[39] In the case of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, the dream encounter with the Prophet did not democratize access to the source of spirituality. Conversely, it singularized the conversion experience as unique only to the king. Only the king was converted by the Prophet himself.

Only the king was taught by the Prophet the tenets of Islam and the Qur'an. The masses would have to wait for other missionaries to convert them. Another Sufi motif that could be culled from the conversion narrative in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* is the manner in which the newly converted king Malikul Saleh learned about Islam. He was tutored personally by the Messenger of God and therefore endowed with what the Sufis termed as *al-'ilm al-laduni* (the knowledge that is from God). In Sufi thought, specifically in the writings of Al-Ghazali, any person who has received such knowledge has reached the status of being a friend of the divine.[40] Such persons require no instruction from any human beings, but their orders are to be followed and their wishes fulfilled. The Sufi missionary Syaikh Ismail understood the gravity of such knowledge, and hence did not see any need to teach the king. For Syaikh Ismail, Malikul Saleh had attained the status of saint, higher in stature than himself. He was an embodiment of the *Insanul Kamil* (Perfect Man) bestowed with *keramat* (Arabic: *karamah,* or "miracles") that feature strongly in Sufi thought.[41]

The plot and themes found in the conversion narratives of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* reverberate in the *Sejarah Melayu*, the "most important text in the study of Malay history and the finest work of Malay literature."[42] Like the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, the actual author of the *Sejarah Melayu* remains unknown. Historians postulate that the text was copied and then made popular by two medieval Malay authors, Tun Bambang and/or Tun Seri Lanang. Here, I utilize the edition popularized by Tun Bambang, whose version of the *Sejarah Melayu* was copied around 1535 after the historic invasion of Melaka by the Portuguese in 1511.[43] More than twenty versions of the *Sejarah Melayu* have been recovered, which is telling of the popularity of the text and its continued influence. The orientalist and expert in Malay history, Richard Winstedt, observes:

> All the evidence points to the first draft of the Sejarah Melayu being written by a scholar, possibly of mixed blood, who was interested in history and in such languages as Javanese and Arabic and even Persian, an observer who could note and mimic foreigners of a cosmopolitan port, a man who knew and could describe intimately the court and nobility of the last Sultan of Melaka. Moreover, he outlived the Portuguese conquest of 1511 by enough years to romance about it.[44]

Sufi themes pervade the text, as seen most vividly in the author's use of term such as "fakir" to describe himself and also key figures in the stories. Fakir is derived from the Arabic word "poor man." In Sufi terminology, fakir denotes "a man of spiritual life" or "a mystic."[45] The author of *Sejarah Melayu* must have been acquainted with Sufi terms or was a practicing Sufi who saw the need to

use such terms as part of the Sufi tradition. To be added to this is the narration of the story of the Prophet Khidhir encountering Alexander the Great (Iskandar Zulkarnain).[46] In Sufi tales, Khidhir means the "Green One," a friend of God who was gifted with mysterious knowledge that no other prophets attained. He is "the epitome of spiritual guide."[47] Khidhir's presence in several Malay Islamic hikayats other than the *Sejarah Melayu* shows the sway that Sufi stories have with Malay authors during the gradualist and populist phases of Islamization.[48] Khidhir was a trope used by way of showing that everyone, be it kings or the common people, were in need of guides in the road to uncover the wisdom of God. These guides were none other than the Sufis.

Unlike the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, the *Sejarah Melayu* has two conversion narratives. The first conversion narrative was about Raja Tengah of Melaka. Like Malikul Saleh of Pasai, he too dreamed of an encounter with Prophet Muhammad, who taught him the declaration of faith. The Prophet then informed of him of the arrival of a ship from Jeddah the next day after asar prayers. Raja Tengah was supposed to follow the instructions of people from the ship. Upon waking up, Raja Tengah found that he was already circumcised. This physical transformation was met with a non-stop recital of the declaration of faith, which caused his worrisome subjects to speculate that their ruler might have been possessed by the devil. The king waited for the ship to arrive, and, true enough, a Sufi and descendant of the Prophet, Saiyid Abdul Aziz, was on it. The king became the student of Saiyid Abdul Aziz, and together they called upon the rest of the population to embrace Islam. The king changed his name to Sultan Muhammad Syah.[49]

The second conversion narrative occurs in Part Six of the *Sejarah Melayu*. The conversion story of Merah Silau, the ruler of Samudera found in *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, is recounted. Although the plot and the Sufi character, Syaikh Ismail, who was moved by the Prophetic command to preach Islam to a land called Samudera where many saints would emerge remained the same, the storyline differs slightly. Merah Silau dreamed of a meeting with Prophet Muhammad, who instructed him to open his mouth. Prophet Muhammad then spit into Merah Silau's mouth. Merah Silau woke up soon after and found that his body had the smell of thick fragrance. [50] Metaphors of Sufi import are again noticeable here. Fragrance was used by Sufi authors to highlight the purity of a person steeped in his or her faith in Allah. Fragrance also denotes divine presence or blessings.[51]

The *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* was another influential conversion narrative. It was written anonymously in the same era as the two preceding texts. There are reasons to believe that the stories in this hikayat have been handed down orally for many decades before that. Like most Malay Islamic hikayats, the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* is a collection of many stories interwoven together to form one authoritative text about the history of Kedah. It is at once a source of

history, an assemblage of local memories, an aggregate of mythologies, and a detailed documentation of the coming into being of a Muslim state in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula.[52] Similar to the *Sejarah Melayu*, the conversion narrative appears late in the text after the exploits of pre-Islamic rulers are narrated in alluring language.

The conversion narrative begins with the story of Syaikh Abdullah, undoubtedly a Sufi mystic and quite certainly a Hadrami Arab, who traveled from Baghdad to Kedah. He met the king, Phra Ong Mahawangsa, whose name shows that he was from Hindu-Buddhist background. Syaikh Abdullah told the king that he came with the final message of God to humankind, which is Islam. The new religion nullifies all other religions that came before it. The king replied: "If that is so, it is hoped that your kind self would help us here to teach the true religion of Islam."[53] Readers of text would immediately wonder why the king had accepted Islam without much hesitation. No answers were given in the hikayat, but it can be surmised that the growing influence of Pasai as a Muslim state must have prompted the Phra Ong Mahawangsa to embrace Islam as a way to bolster his own standing in a changing political landscape. The conversion narrative did not end there.

Syaikh Abdullah then proceeded to destroy all idols until they became dust. He then burned the ruins. Wine was vanquished from the palace. This story is actually a rendition of events that took place immediately after Prophet Muhammad's conquest of Makkah.[54] The author of *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* used the same storyline as a way to show that Kedah's conversion to Islam was as portentous. Upon the destruction of idols and wine jars, Syaikh Abdullah requested the king to bring everyone in the city to him, including women. They were then converted to Islam after the declaration of faith. [55] Phra Ong Mahawangsa's name was changed to "Sultan Muzzafar Syah." From a proud and belligerent ruler, he morphed into a humble monarch. [56] Akin to Malikul Saleh, whom we encountered above, Phra Ong Mahawangsa's change of name linked him to the larger Muslim ummah. It signified a departure from the pre-Islamic past. Readers of the hikayat were made to believe that Kedah's greatness was further enhanced when Islam arrived in Malaysia.[57] The conversion narrative ends with Sufism playing an instrumental role in the mass Islamization of Kedah.

> Hence the people from all corners gathered to gain blessings Syaikh Abdullah till much of the country became pious. The Sultan was elated seeing that his state was devoted to the worship of Allah the Almighty. Whoever that came to the king to pay their respect could not escape Syaikh Abdullah who would teach them the declaration of faith, instruct them of the *tareqat* (path), inform them of the manner to perform the

> five daily prayers and admonish them to give alms and fast and pay compulsory charity following the fasting month together with giving part of their wealth from gold and silver and from food products, and harvest from padi including animals such as the ox, cow, sheep, and whichever that have reached their dues. This is the obligation that is demanded from the laws of the religion of Prophet Muhammad the Messenger of God, that is passed down to his followers who would reap happiness in future.[58]

The last, but no less significant, Sufi-inspired conversion narrative was the *Hikayat Patani* (Story of Patani). The *Hikayat Patani* was written down sometime between 1690 to 1730 and was further modified through the years, though the circulation of stories in it can be dated more than century prior to its compilation.[59] Unlike the three earlier hikayats, *Hikayat Patani* contained no stories of miraculous dream encounters with the Prophet or occasions with Sufis from the Arab world that prompted rulers to switch faiths. The circumstances leading the ruler of Patani, Phaya Tu Nakpa, to consider Islam a religion of choice was a chronic sickness that made his skin crack. In Sufi literature during the medieval period, stories of bodily diseases were often used by Sufi masters as allegories for souls tainted by wrongful beliefs and excessive love of the material world. Submission to the will of the one true God was prescribed as the cure for such diseases.[60] The *Hikayat Patani* adapted and localized such Sufi allegories.

Phaya Tu Nakpa went to great lengths to find a cure for his disease by proclaiming to everyone in his kingdom that anyone who could find a cure to his ailment would receive his daughter's hand in marriage. No one responded until a merchant from Pasai, Syaikh Said, said that he could do the job provided that the king converted to Islam upon being cured. Mention has been made about Pasai as a hub of Islamization since the eleventh century.[61] The inclusion of Syaikh Said in the *Hikayat Patani* shows the extent to which Sufism and Islam had made its presence felt in the northern parts of Malaysia. Needless to say, Phaya Tu Nakpa agreed to be Muslim as he was impressed with Syaikh Said's curing prowess. What the *Hikayat Patani* did not register, however, was that Syaikh Said was but a representation of many Sufi polymaths of the time. Their medicinal knowledge and skills as miracle workers helped in their vocation as missionaries.[62]

The king did not, however, keep his promise. On two occasions, Syaikh Said provided him with a cure to his recurring skin disease, but he remained recalcitrant and renounced Islam as soon as he became well again. Finally, after a third attempt, Syaikh Said made a proposition that left the Phaya Tu Nakpa astounded: he offered to sacrifice his life if the king chose to abandon his faith after he was cured.[63] Syaikh Said's will to martyrdom for the sake of infusing Islam could be traced back to the Sufi notion of bodily sacrifice. In Sufi cosmology,

accepting bodily death in the cause of upholding and disseminating the word of God was viewed as the highest form of love, piety, and devotion. Bodily sacrifice was the key to attaining eternal bliss and intimate meeting with the divine in the hereafter.[64] The king relented to Syaikh Said's plea. After twenty days, the king was once again cured. He accepted Islam wholeheartedly and enjoined his family and subjects to follow suit. The king took on a new name, Ismail Syah Zillullah Fil-Alam and abandoned the worship of idols and the consumption of pork. Like all other conversion narratives, his coming to Islam marked the golden age of Patani. "Hence, Patani became peaceful and prosperous and strangers of all sorts would come and go."[65]

Before closing this chapter, I would like to point out the deafening silence in the *Hikayat Patani* and the other conversion narratives examined here: Malay rulers and nobles converted to Islam not only because of the appeal and allure of the Islamic message. They were equally motivated by the "diverse opportunities for beneficial political, cultural, and economic network, which enhanced local expressions of power."[66] In other words, conversions must be seen as more than a mere leap of faith. Material and other worldly considerations were equally at work as Malays from all strata of society sought to make sense of a changing world and to gain the best from it.

Even though Sufis were but one of the many agents of Islamization in Malaysia, their impact on the local population was felt in all aspects of Malay life. Their success in the infusion of Islam can be attributed to their creative and dynamic ways of disseminating the Islamic message: from personalized preaching, to the use of performing arts, to the setting up of schools and other institutions, as well as imbuing Islamic motifs and ideas through stories. The stories informed by Sufism came in the form of "local re-tellings, adaptations and enlargement of the Qur'anic presentations of scenes from the lives of the prophets, qisas al-alanbiya (Stories of the Prophets) which long before the Germans invented the term heilsgeschichte, established a widely socialized perception of a universalistic salvation history from Adam to Muhammad."[67]

The impact of Sufis and Sufism lay beyond spreading Islam in Malaysia. Through their writings and teachings, they aided in the furtherance of the intellectual spirit of the Malays. If the Hindu-Buddhist era in Malaysian history brought about the flowering of culture and the making of a highly artistic civilization with its fine monuments, temples, sculptures, textiles, and ethical codes, Sufis, scholars, and other missionaries that came with them adorned the Malays with a scholarly acumen that advanced their civilization further. Osman Bakar sums it up handsomely when he writes that Sufism heralded the creation of a great Malay civilization which "attained its greatest cultural and intellectual heights, or for that matter, that the intellectual history of the Malays, properly speaking can

be said to have begun."[68] Such rationalism and intellectualism was evidenced in a plethora of literary and legal works, from the hikayats to syairs and legal digests that were sensitive to local customs while linking Muslims in Malaysia to "more globalising shari'a norms."[69] Seen in that light, it would be wrong to say Sufism in Malaysia was more syncretic when compared with other parts of the world. Islam had always intermingled with local cultures to produce a new religious dynamic. The Sufis, excellent as they were in many branches of knowledge while being expert in harmonizing pre-Islamic cultures with the shari'a, were able to make Islam a growing and culturally-adaptive religion in Malaysia for many centuries.[70]

PART II

Populist Islamization

3

Kerajaan Proselytism

AFTER MANY WEEKS of heavy fighting with scores of buildings and much livestock destroyed, on August 25, 1511, the great Melakan kerajaan fell into the hands of the invading Portuguese. It was a momentous event in the history of Malaysia, one that would be re-enacted time and again in history books, school textbooks, movies, and museums. In the eyes of many local historians and popular writers, Melaka's fall signified the end of a once-great Muslim regional empire known globally for its lively commerce, diverse population, and active missionizing of the neighboring states and societies. It was a great loss to the Malays, a source of sadness for Muslims, and a dark day for the rajas and lieutenants who were gradually shaping the contours of the Malay world. The end of the Melakan kerajaan, as Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy (a prominent Malaysian radical nationalist) hyperbolically has it, marked the beginnings of the decline of other Muslim kingdoms, ushering in the spread of colonialism in Malaysia.[1]

The historical balance sheet is, however, more complex than Burhanuddin had imagined it to be. Melaka's fall was, of course, tragic for Muslims as it sent shockwaves to the budding Islamic kingdoms in the Malay world. They, too, were vulnerable to being annihilated by a non-Muslim power. But the downfall of one Muslim polity did not signal the end of the infusion of Islam in Malaysia. The sacking of the Melakan raja did not necessarily usher in the collapse of the Melakan cosmopolitan Muslim society. Tributary states that were previously loyal to Melaka did not succumb to Portuguese rule.[2] Islam in Melaka remained in place, and there was not to be another "Melakan tragedy" in the many decades that followed. In fact, the Melakan kingdom's descent encouraged the other kingdoms to supercharge the process of Islamizing Malaysia. They strengthened their defenses and proceeded to produce and host Sufis, scholars, and missionaries during the phase of populist Islamization that lasted until the eighteenth century. These kingdoms capitalized on the void left by Melaka to become centers

of Muslim propagation in their own light. Aceh benefited most from Melaka's fall. Under the kingdom's first Sultan, Ali Mughayat Syah (?–1530), Aceh overshadowed Pasai as the leading entrepot and grew to become a conquering force in north Sumatra. Within less than a century, the Acehnese kingdom reached its peak in power and influence during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda.[3] In Melaka itself under Portuguese rule, Muslim traders continued the work of infusing Islam. The Portuguese writer Tomas Pires (1465–1540) observed that Muslim traders brought products and goods to Melaka well into Portuguese rule, "and so having come they brought with them mollahs and priests learned in the sect of Mohamed—chiefly Arabs, who are esteemed in these parts for their knowledge of the said sect."[4.]

Indeed, the momentum of Islamization in the Malay world had greatly accelerated during Melaka's rise as a regional power in the fifteenth century. Prior to the Portuguese invasion of Melaka, almost all states of the Malaysian Peninsula, including Patani and the Riau Islands, had been converted to Islam, even though a significant part of the population may have remained non-Muslim. In many Malay states, Islamic laws were enforced alongside remnants of pre-Islamic legal codes.[5] Anthony Milner cements this point when he writes that "although the arrival of Islam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appears to have had little impact initially on the development of the Malay polity, from that time onwards Malay political culture became linked to developments elsewhere in the Muslim world and these developments were eventually to threaten the ideological underpinnings of the Malay state."[6] Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia thus became more connected to the larger Muslim world as Islamic kingdoms grew in number during the populist phase of Islamization. Islam became the state religion of Brunei in the late fourteenth century. Much of Borneo, namely Sabah and Sarawak, however, held on to traditional religions but remained friendly with neighboring Muslim kingdoms. By the early fifteenth century, Muslim missionaries from the Brunei and Sulu kerajaans started their proselytizing work at Lahad Batu, Semporna, Kuala Penyu, Sipitang Membakut, Papar, and Tawau, Sabah. Many Bruneian Muslims also moved to Sabah to establish settlements there.[7]

This chapter proceeds by answering, first of all, the vexed historical question: Why did the elites in Malay societies—referring primarily to the rajas—accept Islam? Following that, I explain the strategies used by the Muslim kingdoms to infuse Islam from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. These kerajaans were strong proponents of Islam in a manner I term "kerajaan proselytism." It was a top-down form of Islamization structured and determined by the will and visions of respective rajas. Rajas or men of prowess were obviously not the only prime movers of kerajaan proselytism. As seen in the case of Sufis and later with women, scholars, and emissaries from overseas, the rajas worked in tandem with

other agents of Islamization to make Islam a popular religion. In the last section, I explore the ways in which three model Malay-Muslim polities—Brunei, Patani, and the most illustrious of them all, Melaka—transformed Islam into a force to be reckoned with in Malaysia.

Elite Conversion to Islam

In addition to the appeal of the Islamic message and mystical epiphanies discussed earlier, the rajas converted to Islam out of political-economic considerations. The love for worldly power and the glamor of wealth coupled with religious conviction were combined sources of motivation for the rajas to accept and subsequently infuse Islam into the furthest reaches of their kingdoms.[8] Such instrumental decisions were not at all unique to the Malay rajas. Since the birth of Islam and its eventual spread in the Arab world and beyond, non-Muslim elites had converted to the religion in response to the shifting configurations of global politics and developments in trade. The rate of non-Muslim elite conversions increased as Islamic empires expanded militarily and mustered economic strength and as weaker and fallen kingdoms had little choice but to submit to the hegemony of Muslims.[9] The rajas desired a lion's share of the lucrative Muslim political and trading networks from the Arab world, South Asia, Africa, and China that were vigorously controlling the thoroughfares in the Indian Ocean. Once the Malay rajas were resolved on converting to Islam, they heralded the transformation of the Malay identity or *Malayu* from a linguistic group to a religious community held together by political-economic interests.[10]

The novelty factor provides another explanation for why the rajas converted to Islam. Islam provided the rajas with new sources of legitimacy, new elements of credibility as they were confronted with aggressive kingdoms surrounding them and conspirators from within. If "Brand Islam" in the twenty-first century refers to the marketization and commodification of Islamic products, from the fourteenth century onward, Islamic branding promised, and indeed, conferred enhanced prestige to the Malay rajas.[11] As soon as the rajas converted to Islam, they had by default associated themselves with an imagined ummah known for its commanding empires such as the Ummayads, Abbasid, and Fatimids, among many others. The rajas adopted the notion of lofty designations, borrowing from the Arab-Persian kings, adding another layer of illustrious title on top of the already established notion of divine kingship. By converting to Islam, Malay rajas were able to flaunt a fresh list of symbols, titles, and regalia developed by the Seljuqs, Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals to refashion their authority. These symbols and titles as well as the distinctions that came with them provided further justification for their continued dominance.[12]

We cannot neglect the competition between Christianity and Islam in the Malay world in quickening the conversion of the Malay rajas. Since the fifteenth century, the rajas were aware of the spread of Christianity through the work of early missionaries but were generally neutral toward the faith. The period from 1550 to 1650, however, changed their perception of the religion. This was an era that witnessed widespread conversions in the Malay world to Sunni Islam and Catholic Christianity, with Islam gaining the larger number of elite converts.[13] Many rajas in the Malay world—Muslim or non-Muslim—viewed the Portuguese attacks on Melaka and, later, the Spanish invasion of Manila in 1570 as a struggle between two competing religions. The ferocity of Portuguese and Spanish attacks on Muslim lands and subsequent raids on other kingdoms as well as ships left a deep impression on many non-Muslim elites that Christians were determined to use force and aggression to achieve religious and economic ends. Seeing the imminent threat of invasion of their lands, Muslim elites moved quickly to form alliances among themselves and with non-Muslim Malay polities. They impeded Christian missionizing and European takeover of trading routes as well as port cities. In many instances, Muslim and non-Muslim elites conducted joint armed campaigns against Christian strongholds in Java and the Malay Peninsula. While rivalries among local Malay kingdoms endured, Muslim rajas were on the same page in heightening missionary activities in non-Muslim lands in the race to gain more allies in the battle against the Western Christians.[14]

Still, Islam did not take full root in the hearts of the new converts during this phase of populist Islamization, nor did Malaysia became totally Islamic. Arab travelers to Melaka in the late fifteenth century expressed their displeasure regarding the easy marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims, the ubiquitous consumption of wine and other intoxicants, and the eating of dogs. One traveler by name of Ahmad ibn Majid wrote disparagingly: "You do not know whether they are Muslims or not."[15] Court rivalries, fratricides, and skirmishes between Muslims were common, revealing to us that Malays were all too human and were slowly making sense of Islam, its laws, norms, and values.

To accept Islam required a leap of faith on the part of the Malay rajas. To make religion popular in a landscape populated by non-Muslims required wit and cunning on their part. The rajas employed two main strategies to popularize Islam, which I term as "*halus*" (subtle) and "*tegas*" (assertive). With the benefit of historical hindsight, these strategies fit squarely within the framework of entwined history in that the rajas sought to make the most of the globalizing world of Islam just as they were tactful in transforming local realities. The rajas also made pacts with scholarly communities that enlightened and galvanized the masses. As heads and embodiments of states, these rajas ensured that societies moved together with them in infusing Islam into their ways of life. Above all, even as Muslims, the

rajas remained closely connected with non-Muslims who populated and traveled in and out of Malaysia. Without a combination of the two strategies and with Christianization posing as a competitor in the race for converts, kerajaan proselytism would not have been efficacious. Without ensuring that these strategies were sustained for many generations, the rajas would not have been able hold sway over their subjects and obtain their obeisance to their *daulat* (sovereignty and superiority in status).[16] Having established these general points, it is pertinent to note that each and every raja employed these two strategies in accordance with the nuances and demographic makeup of their respective states. Even so, some general trends can be discerned to give us a clearer idea of why kerajaan proselytism was so effective.

Subtle Strategies

Subtle strategies used by the rajas involved the use of ideology to display the might and magnificence of their kingdoms, entering into alliances through marriages, treatises, and pacts as well as maintaining a cosmopolitan predisposition. Describing the might of the kerajaan and its significance, in his classic work on historical Bali entitled *Negara*, Clifford Geertz draws our attention to how "[c]ourt ceremonialism was the driving force of court politics. . . . Power served pomp, not pomp power."[17] The power of premodern Southeast Asian states was not expressed solely in terms of brute force and hard power but also through the projection of distinctiveness, opulence, and magnificence. According to Geertz: "The state drew its force, which was real enough, from its imaginative energies, its semiotic capacity to make inequality enchant."[18] This is not to suggest that Malay kerajaans were but hollow kingships with no real power. Rather, soft strategies such as displaying the might of kingdom worked in tandem with the assertion of physical strength over citizens and enemies.

Among the ways in which the raja flaunted their might was through the ideology of divinity and all-encompassing kingship. Drawing upon the examples of the Abbasid, Safavid, Seljuq, Ottoman, and Mughal rulers, Malay rajas styled themselves as "Sultans" and also zillullah fil-alam, whose *titah* (commands) were to be obeyed.[19] The use of the term zillullah fil-alam, or "God's shadow in the world," deserves further elaboration. It was utilized by Muslim rulers to display the king's authority beyond the secular realm, but it included religious matters as well. In Malaysia, as in the other parts of the Muslim world, there was no binary between the secular and religious when it comes to how the rajas conceived their power and positions.[20] To proclaim the mantle of God's shadow in the world was to make clear to the masses that to disobey them was to disobey God himself. Such proclamations also entailed accountability on the part of the kings.

As God's shadow on earth, the rajas had to exhibit the best of conduct, gracefulness, and gentleness in mannerism and speech and be defenders of justice and Islam.[21]

Another title that the rajas used to underline that their authority encompassed both the secular and the sacred was "Nasir al-Dunya wa'l-Din" (Helper of the World and of the Religion) (See Figure 3.1). This title was first used by the Seljuq king Nasr al-Din Artuq Arslan who ruled from 1200 to 1239. Following in the footsteps of Arslan, the Melakan king Muzaffar Shah (?–1459) adopted and inscribed this title on coins. The Sultans of Brunei used the same title and minted it on their coins during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While most kerajaan minted coins from tin, in the northern Malay states, the titles of the rajas were engraved on gold coins. The Kelantanese rajas styled themselves as *Malik al-Adil* (The Just Ruler) and *Al-Mutawakkil 'Ala Allah* (The Most Faithful to Allah).[22] Like many Chinese, Javanese, and other coins used from the tenth to the eighteenth centuries, these currencies functioned both as a medium of exchange and as propaganda for the distinguished standing and character of the Malay rajas.[23]

The Malay rajas avoided styling themselves as *khalifah* (caliphs), although many Muslim kings in the Arab world, Persia, and Turkey had used that title since the eighth century. It could be that the Malay rajas were acutely aware of the power dynamics in the Muslim world, which might not permit newly founded Muslim kingdoms to make arrogant claims that they represented the Muslim ummah in general. Claiming to be caliphs would also open the Malay kingdoms to attacks from other Muslim kingdoms vying for the same title. As an alternative, the Malay rajas used Hindu titles such as *Maharaja* or *Maharaja diraja* (Great Ruler) on top of the new Arab-Islamic titles. Titles such as *Yang di Pertuan* (He Who Is Paramount) live on today and were ascribed only to kings. These hybrid titles can be found in many seals issued by Malay kingdoms upon their conversion to Islam from the twelfth century.[24]

Magnificent titles came together with the changing of names. Upon conversion to Islam, the rajas quickly replaced or supplemented their Hindu-Buddhist

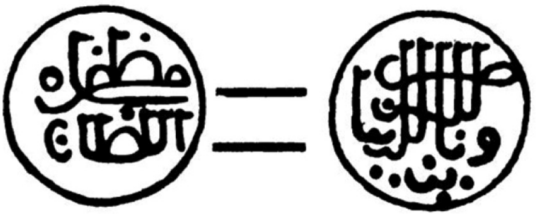


FIGURE 3.1 Coins from the Kerajaan

names with Muslim ones. The changing of names signaled the promulgation of a new identity. It connoted a movement away from being part a preceding collective or belief system to a novel one with its own distinctive monotheistic worldview, global sense of community, and rising position in the world. The rajas did not just assume any names commonly found among Muslims at the time. They (or the people who converted them) carefully selected names that communicated deep, precise, and powerful meanings and which would eventually have historical significance. Names signified power, and power was magnified through names.

The first Muslim Sultan of Kedah, whose name was "Phra Ong Maha Wangsa," had it changed to "Muzaffar Shah." Muzaffar meant "Victorious" in Arabic and was actually the name of several prominent Arabian kings and military generals in the Seljuq dynasty.[25] Parameswara, the founding ruler of Melaka, changed his name to "Iskandar Shah." Iskandar was the Arabic variant of Alexander the Great, a great ruler mentioned in the Qur'an. "Shah," in turn, was a Persian word for ruler or king, used by Malay rajas to compound the already grandiloquent Arabic name. Similarly, upon accepting Islam in the late fourteenth century, the Sultan of Brunei Awang Alak Belatar (1368–1402) took on a new name, "Muhammad Shah." Muhammad was the name of the last and most significant of prophets in Islam. The Buddhist king Patani, Phaya Tu Nakpa, changed his name to "Ismail Shah." Ismail or Ismael was the name of a prophet from whom the Prophet Muhammad traced his lineage. The adoption of these Arabicized names among rajas from the eleventh century onward was followed by non-elites in the Malay society as they accepted Islam and saw the privileges to be gained from Islamic naming practices for themselves and their families.[26]

Unlike in Malaysia, surnames in the Arab world were usually associated with genealogies and with prominent places wherefrom families traced their origins. The Hadrami Arab Sayyids, for example, kept genealogies back to the family of the Prophet Muhammad. Names of fathers, grandfathers, and so forth were carefully documented, and family trees were kept and handed down from generation to generation. The Malay rajas did not have such genealogies, but they certainly saw their importance upon accepting Islam. Hence, mythical yet prestigious genealogies were invented to reconfigure the identity of the king from Hindu-Buddhist to one linked to Islamic heritage. If these genealogical claims legitimated the formation of new dynasties elsewhere in the Muslim world, in the Malay world such claims further amplified the already existing notion in the pre-Islamic period that the Malay rajas were divinely ordained rulers. These genealogies also elevated the status of Malay kingdoms onto the same plane as, if not superior to, other Muslim kingdoms of their time.[27]

In Malay traditional literature, such genealogies were known as *salsilah*, *silsilah*, *salasilah*, or *tarsila*. A genre in itself, they were often beautifully written

and decorated, preserved and read aloud to the masses, who in turn would memorize them and keep them to heart.[28] Some Malay rajas stretched their genealogies back to Prophet Adam. Others alluded to connections with the princes of Bukit Siguntang in Palembang, who claimed descent from Indian and Persian monarchs. The most notable genealogies, as told in the *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Banjar* (Story of Banjar), *Hikayat Aceh* (Story of Aceh), and *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* (Story of Alexander), were dated back to the Macedonian king Alexander the Great. Why, of all personalities, was Alexander chosen as the rajas' forefather? Myths and legends aside, the tracing of familial links back to a known king was meant to showcase the Malay rajas' vision of being the conquerors and masters of the Eastern and Western worlds. To have Alexander as the rajas' invented forebear also showed that their ethnic backgrounds were not local but global in character.[29] One other reason why Malay rajas included Alexander as their noble ancestor was to stretch the limits of public imagination about their ancestries. Alexander was thus a fictive figure used transcend any conceivable claim by the masses of genealogies and lineages more powerful and more incredible than the rajas. Such ostentatious genealogies exercised a strong hold on the minds of the Malays.[30]

These genealogies did more than aggrandizing the global associations the rajas claimed to have. Such texts unravel the networks of kinships and power relations among the Malay kerajaans. They reveal the complex ways in which Malay rajas in Malaysia and the wider Malay world were intertwined with one another while displaying the magnitude of bonds between them. From this vantage point, Malay genealogies were akin to their Arab counterparts. They are "accumulative projects that folded within themselves multiple generations, familiar geographies, and known histories."[31] The genealogies of the Perak and Johor sultanates were traced to the Melakan sultanate and therefore back to Alexander the Great. The genealogy of the Perak rajas recorded nuptial ties with the Pahang royalty and the Sayyids who settled in Terengganu. Kelantanese rajas shared kinship ties with Patani Muslim rulers through their genealogy. Seen in totality, such genealogies publicly portrayed the rajas and their families as a distinct class of their own, bequeathed with *darah keturunan* (bloodlines) different from the masses. These genealogies presented the Islamic credentials of the rajas. Through these means, the rajas encouraged the conversion to Islam of other non-Muslim elites who desired entry into their circles of esteem.[32]

To names and genealogies must be added royal ceremonies. Highly ornamented and exquisite royal ceremonies to commemorate the installation of rajas, marriages, holidays, anniversaries, promotion of persons to higher positions, and arrivals of important guests fortified the rajas' power and magnificence. It was during these royal ceremonies that the symbols of rajas' magical

and other epiphenomenal powers were made visible to the common people. The royal regalia, usually consisting of an umbrella, weapons, musical instruments, and elephants, were showcased for public viewing. These objects "did not just represent power; they were powerful in and of themselves and required careful treatment."[33] The fact that remnants of pre-Islamic regalia were always included among the royal regalia even after the rajas' conversion to Islam was in no doubt the rajas' subtle way of winning over their non-Muslim subjects. Islam did not eradicate the presence, functions, and overall spectacle as well as the importance of these ceremonies. Rather, as Muslims, the rajas included these ceremonies with other important days in the Islamic calendar.[34]

In the later years of the nineteenth century, colonial officials viewed such royal ceremonies as major drains of state coffers and deemed them fatuous. Colonialism had no tolerance for Malay-Islamic pomp, nor could colonial officials truly understand the significance of the lavish ceremonies in the minds of the Malays. And yet, at the height of Muslim power in Malaysia, such events were never viewed as wasteful, but these were, for the most part, landmark moments for both the rajas and their subjects. Malays were passionate for *nama* (titles), and these ceremonies were pivotal occasions that witnessed the conferring of titles to loyal officials and courageous warriors. To be sure, the search for nama characterized Malay political culture before the nineteenth century. So preoccupied were the Malays in their search for nama that they would seek all means and ways to obtain titles even though such privileges yielded no material benefits.[35] Some rajas, like Sultan 'Abd Ghafur Muhaiyuddin, had high-sounding names and titles: he was, however, for the large part, "very poor, he was more of a merchant than a king."[36] In order to gain nama from the Muslim rajas, many Malays accepted Islam or maintained close relations with rajas if they chose to remain non-Muslims. The most significant among the non-Muslims were the Orang Laut. Sea nomads who engaged in trade at the ports of Muslim kingdoms, the Orang Laut were also known for piratical activities in the Straits of Melaka. The Malay rajas entered into accords with the Orang Laut and incorporated them into their naval forces. In exchange for their loyalty, the rajas showered them with "titles, valued goods, and sometimes royal women in return for their loyalty and faithful service."[37] In a world driven by kerajaan proselytism, ceremonies and the granting of titles and favors were mediums for the construction of alliances and loyalty. Islam grew alongside this symbolic but potent conferment of status by Muslim rajas on non-Muslims allies.

Kerajaan proselytism depended on another subtle strategy: maintaining alliances through marriages, treatises, and pacts. Other than the Orang Laut, the Malay rajas built strong ties with other rajas both within the region and globally. Locally, marriages were often the means to forge close relations

between Malay states, and through this, Islam was infused, usually first among the elites and then the masses. Parameswara, the first ruler of Melaka, married the daughter of the Sultan of Pasai and soon converted to Islam upon marriage. The Sultan of Brunei, Awang Alak Betatar, become Muslim when he was married to the daughter of the Sultan of Johore. The queens of Patani were also married to or shared kinship ties with the royal courts of Siak, Johor and Pahang. Missionaries and scholars traveled and preached in kingdoms that were tied together by way of marriage. Marriages brought many non-Muslim rajas into the fold of Islam.[38]

Through marriage, the rajas also brokered links with more powerful kingdoms. Marriage served more than proselytizing ends, as a means of keeping would-be enemies at bay and potential allies closer. The Sejarah Melayu related the story of the marriage of Sultan Mansur Shah and Princess Hang Li Po from Ming China. Ming official records made no mention of such a princess. But that her name was featured in an influential hikayat as a princess who came with 500 courtiers and ladies showed that the Malay rajas approved and promoted marriages for diplomatic ends other than to gain protection from a superior power. The Chinese entourage was given a special place to settle in Melaka called Bukit Cina, which provided the necessary conditions for more intermarriage between the Chinese and the Malay community.[39]

In the same vein, the Malay rajas in the northern parts of Malaysia entered into matrimonial relations with Siamese rulers. They married their daughters into the royal courts of Ayutthaya to avoid incursions by Siamese armies. The Malay rajas gained symbolic recognition by a major regional power as well as access to the bustling ports in the Siamese kingdom through marriage channels and tributes. The Siamese reciprocated such marks of friendship by marrying their own princesses to Malay rajas like the marital nuptials with rajas of Singapore. That the Siamese were non-Muslims was not an issue for the Malay rajas. Survival of the newly established Muslim kingdoms during the populist phase of Islamization was the foremost consideration. Some compromises had to be made for Islam and kingdoms to grow in strength.[40]

It is obvious from the ensuing discussion that even as Muslims, the rajas maintained their cosmopolitan outlook, especially in dealing with non-Muslims. It was such cosmopolitanism, or what I term "Muslim cosmopolitanism," that helped to gain more converts to Islam.[41] They were cosmopolitan in projecting their identities in such a manner that incorporated both Islamic and pre-Islamic elements. Local adat were left largely undisturbed. More elements were added to smoothen the process of making these customs congruent with Islamic precepts. The rajas' main goal was to ensure social harmony

and to avoid offending local sensibilities. The shari'a was introduced in stages. As an oft-cited Malay proverb has it:

Adat bersendi hukum,	Customary law hinges on religious law,
Hukum bersendi kitabullah.	Religious law on the word of God.
Kuat adat, ta'gadoh hokum,	If custom is strong, religion is not upset;
Kuat hukum, ta'gadoh adat	If religion is strong, custom is not upset.[42]

Because rajas' conceptions of identity, territory, and political boundaries were fluid and permeable, anyone could move between kingdoms with relative ease. Malays and non-Malays intermingled with one another easily. Hybrid or creole communities, consisting of Arabs, Chinese, and Indians who married local women, were created as a result of such cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan predisposition of the rajas encouraged the creation of vibrant port cities, with Melaka priding itself as a port that had eighty-four languages spoken in it when under Muslim rule. The rajas gave much room for traders from all over the world to trade and reside in their domains, protecting foreign fleets and offering many merchants honorable positions in their kingdoms. Because of such openness, Muslim and non-Muslim travelers such as Marco Polo and many other foreign travelers and emissaries witnessed the various trading, religious, familial, and political networks that intersected in the Malay kerajaans during the age of kerajaan proselytism. Some chose to settle there and became part of the growing Muslim community.[43]

Assertive Strategies

The use of subtle strategies enabled the Malay rajas to infuse Islam in a manner that was easily accepted, if not tolerated, by the non-Muslims. But such strategies needed to be complemented by assertive measures of enforcing Islamic norms and values gradually being internalized by new Muslims. Moreover, assertive strategies were the rajas' way of displaying to friends and enemies, compatriots and citizens, that they were capable of resorting to forceful means should their authority and faith be put to challenge. Assertive strategies were therefore necessary to maintain the time-honored kerajaan order. Rajas, as many historians have shown, lived in an environment inundated by threats, in the form of interventions by other kingdoms, succession disputes, elite treason, mass rebellions, and challenges to their power by religious groups and charismatic personalities. The flight of the peasantry that served as slaves and indentured labor was also a perennial problem facing rajas.[44] These challenges necessitated the use of assertive strategies to

enable the kerajaans to contest non-aligned and opposing forces. Laws defining the perimeters of acceptable conduct and the punishments for any transgression were most essential. A second assertive strategy was through war and occupation. Next was patronage and dispatching of scholars and missionaries within the kingdoms and to other parts of the Malay world. Although they were generally mild in their approaches to non-Muslims, scholars and missionaries progressively demanded that Muslims practice Islam in ways in keeping with the shari'a.

One noticeable feature of the laws decreed by the rajas was that they were not wholesale appropriations of the prevailing Islamic laws in the Arab world, Ottoman Turkey, or Mughal India. The rajas exercised their own creative genius and fused pre-Islamic legal codes with those enshrined in the Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadith. These legal codes were recorded on stones or with writing materials called *dluwang* made from the beaten bark of the mulberry tree. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such legal codes were written down to clarify any doubts, to make clear to the subjects of the new laws of Islam that they were enforced and the relationship between such laws and customs.[45] There were three types of legal texts in the Malay states. Richard Winstedt explained this at some length:

> There are digests and tribal sayings that embody the mild indigenous matriarchal law of agricultural clans, the 'adat perpateh or Law of Prime Ministers, found among the Minangkabaus of Sumatra and their colonists in Negri Sembilan. There are digests of patriarchal law deterrent to criminals, the 'adat Temenggong or Law of the Minister for War and Police, evolved for the mixed population of ports, law introduced largely from India along with commerce by traders and adventurers, at first Hindu and later Muslim. (This second type of law may be further divided into general digests of constitutional criminal and civil law, full of relics of indigenous custom and borrowings from the period of Hindu influence but modelled on text-books of Muslim canon law and containing many of its provisions; secondly, digests of port rules adopted by countries like Acheh and Kedah from regulations of the kind India knew from the days of Chandra Gupta to the time of the Great Moguls; and, thirdly, digests of maritime law compiled, it is said, for Bugis trading vessels.) The last of the main types requires no comment, being Malay translations of orthodox Muslim works of the school of Shafi'i, especially treatises on the law of marriage, divorce, and the legitimacy of children, the only branch of Muslim canon that Malays have adopted practically unchanged.[46]

Among the legal codes in the Muslim Malay states were the Terengganu Inscription (or *Batu Bersurat Terengganu*), *Undang-Undang Melaka* (Melakan

Laws), *Hukum Kanun Pahang* (Pahang Digest), *Hukum Kanun Kedah* (Kedah Digest), *Hukum Kanun Johor* (Johor Digest), *Undang-undang Sembilan Puluh Sembilan Perak* (Ninety-Nine Laws of Perak), and the Sungei Ujong Digest. To this must be added other maritime laws that outlined the rules governing trade, commerce, and the running of ports as well as fair dealings with both Muslims and non-Muslims.[47] Taken together, these legal codes underscored the role of the rajas as the enforcers and expounders of customary and Islamic laws. The customary laws, known as *Adat Temenggung* (patriarchal customary law) and *Adat Pepatih* (matriarchal customary law), usually coalesced to form hybrid legal codes.[48] In large part, these legal codes upheld the shari'a and the hudud.

The Terengganu Inscription, or Terengganu Stone, is an example. On the matter of premarital sex and adultery, the Terengganu Inscription stressed that unmarried offenders were to be given a hundred lashes of the rattan, while married persons must be "buried up to the waist and pelted with stones and put to death."[49] Such harsh punishment against Muslim sexual offenders served to regulate morality within Muslim domains. The law served to limit the number of children born out of wedlock, who could be uncared for or susceptible to reversion out of Islam. In *Undang-Undang Melaka*, enacted in the early fifteenth century by Sultan Muhammad Shah, the punishment for apostasy was death. This in itself was a motivation for the newly converted to think twice before deciding to revert to their old religion. The same preventive measure for those already converted can be seen in the *Undang-undang Melaka*. On the matter of prayers, for example:

> If a man believes that prayer is obligatory, he is ordered to perform it. If he does not perform the prayer due to illness, he has not turned apostate, but he will be ordered thrice to repent like an apostate. If he does perform the prayer, he will be pardoned.[50]

By virtue of the influence that the Melakan Sultanate had over the rest of the Malay states, the *Undang-Undang Melaka* provided the template for all the other legal codes. More than fifty versions of the legal text have been recorded and scattered across the Malay world. Many aspects of the *Undang-undang Melaka* were adapted and contextualized by other Malay kingdoms in their own legal codes.[51] A sample of such contextualization was evidenced in the Pahang legal digest, written in 1595 during the reign of Sultan 'Abd Ghafur Muhaiyuddin. Like the *Undang-Undang Melaka*, the Pahang legal digest stated that Muslims ought to abide by customary and Islamic laws. Further to the point, the kerajaan ensured that Muslim interests were safeguarded first, although all other subjects enjoyed state protection, thus sending a clear message to all non-Muslims of the

extra privileges they would enjoy should they accept Islam. Even abandoned children were protected by the state and seen as valuable persons that could be added to the growing Muslim population. The Pahang legal digest stated: "When there are claims made over [abandoned] children, a Muslim and an infidel, a free man or a slave, must be afforded equal rights. If the child is found a Muslim country, make him a Muslim. If the child is found in a country of infidels where there are Muslims, uphold that the child is a Muslim."[52]

Finally, another legal code was the Sungei Ujong digest, enacted in the matriarchal kingdom of Negri Sembilan, possibly the early as the eighteenth century. Much like the *Undang-undang Sembilan Puluh Sembilan Perak* (Ninety-Nine Laws of Perak), the Sungei Ujong digest went beyond laying down the laws of the country in the rajas' endeavor to infuse Islam; the legal code also outlined the responsibilities of the rajas. In other words, although the rajas were to be respected by the masses, legally, they were also expected to manifest certain standards of decorum and noble qualities befitting the Muslim heads of state. In article 53 of the digest, it was stated:

> The rank of a king is based on ten qualities: 1. giving much praise to God, 2. truthfulness, 3. wisdom and riches, 4. courage, 5. watchfulness and trust in God, 6. trust in God and certainty, 7. steadfastness, 8. patience, 9. generosity to all subjects, 10. knowledge of the rank and standing of all subjects. If kings possess all the above qualities, whatever they undertake will be favoured by fortune, God willing.[53]

The rajas were more than Islamizers of the Malay states through the instrument of laws. To remain secure at the apex of Muslim societies, they were obliged to be a living embodiment of a good Muslim who espoused the moral standards, injunctions, and commandments of Islam. The litmus test of a raja that could stay in power for as long as he willed it was the manner in which he or she maintained *muafakat* (mutual consultation) with his or her ministers and confidantes.[54]

The seemingly draconian laws found in the legal codes of the kerajaans did not always reflect the actual practices on the ground. The rajas were cognizant that non-Muslims would be dissuaded from converting to Islam should the laws be enforced in harsh ways. Even Muslims found to have committed the crime of apostasy were not punished right away. Offenders were given three chances to repent, and such leniency applied to other offenses too.[55] Some rajas were undoubtedly cruel toward their subjects. The Malay court texts are replete with stories of torture and inhumane treatment of anyone who angered the rajas or were deemed as disloyal. Still, much tolerance was shown to the *dhimmis* (non-Muslim minorities) in particular. Unlike in other parts of the Muslim world, no

jizya (poll tax) was imposed on them. Such flexibility in the implementation of Islamic laws varied from one kerajaan to another. Overall, the laws under kerajaan underscored the cosmopolitan nature of Islam in Malaysia in so far as these strategies kept the rajas in power.[56]

Laws were effective tools of kerajaan proselytism, but their usefulness was restricted to areas where the rajas could tangibly assert their authority. There was always the looming threat of being overwhelmed by non-Muslim kingdoms and even by kingdoms that were already Islamized. Power and politics in the Malay world at the time did, at times, transcend shared beliefs. It was for this reason that the rajas used force as one means to infuse Islam—and by force, I mean conquest and subjugation. That the kerajaan did wage wars does not nullify the fact that the Islamization process during the populist phase was in general peaceful. Rather, violence and other forceful measures were indispensable means to expand the reach of Islam in the region.

The legal codes mentioned earlier actually made specific reference to the use of force. The Pahang legal digest unabashedly proclaimed: "There are seven established requirements for [those who wish to participate in] perang sabil: First, Islam; second, attained puberty; third, good manners; fourth, male; fifth, healthy; sixth, courageous; seventh, determined to go [to] war."[57] Narratives of holy war were also present in many court texts and religious treatises forming part of kerajaan proselytism. The kerajaans equipped their armed forces with the best technology taken from the Ottomans and the Chinese. A great number of these superior arms were also produced domestically.[58] These war technologies enabled Melaka, for example, to deter and repulse Siamese invasion and also occupy the neighboring kingdoms of Pahang, Terengganu, Patani, Kampar, Siak, and Indragiri in Sumatra and many parts of Java. Rulers of these conquered territories accepted Islam in order to remain in power and supplied Melaka with products for trade and food for the local population.[59] The Melakan rajas also conducted many raids against vassals who did not abide by or threatened its maritime trade. Many of these battles were financed by foreign Muslim traders who colluded with the rajas to gain access to many ports under Muslim influence.[60]

Conquests in that milieu were motivated by both faith and the quest for regional supremacy. Piety and pragmatism were entwined and shifted in response to shifting exigencies. Having dominated non-Muslim lands in Sabah, Sarawak, and Luzon, the Brunei kerajaan maintained good relations with the Muslim kingdom in Manila in the two kingdoms' joint bid to spread Islam in the Sulu Zone and other parts of what came to be known as the Philippines.[61] The Johor kerajaan, on the other hand, forged an alliance with the Portuguese in Melaka to keep in check Acehnese attacks. As soon as its military position improved, Johor turned its back on the Portuguese in 1587. The Johor raja went further to

unite other Muslim polities on the Malay Peninsula and Java to launch holy wars against the Portuguese. Faith and the fervor to regain the lost Islamic legacies of Melaka from the non-Muslim Portuguese prompted Johor to attack its former ally.[62] Upon the decline of Aceh and the Portuguese, Johor then used its military superiority to magnify its influence in east Sumatra. The kerajaan also dispatched Muslim missionaries to many parts of the Malay world.[63] From 1613 to 1620, the tides turned against Johor, Perak, Pahang, and Kedah as they were placed under Acehnese rule. Clearly, there were no permanent friends or permanent enemies, either among Muslims or between Muslims and non-Muslims. All sides, regardless of their religious backgrounds, shed rivers of blood.

But what kept Muslims the hegemonic force in the Malay world until the eighteenth century was the strength of solidarities among them even amidst these episodes of violence. Here, the work of Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) becomes useful a tool for analysis. The fate of great Muslim empires, according to Ibn Khaldun, hinged upon *asabiyyah* (group feeling). Group feeling was a chief driving force behind the rapid rise and fall of Muslim dynasties and societies. With group feeling, Muslims worked together to defend their borders and widen Islam's influence in the world. As Ibn Khaldun expresses it handsomely: "All religious laws and practices and everything that the masses are expected to do requires group feeling. Only with the help of group feeling can a claim be successfully pressed, as we have stated before. Group feeling is necessary to the Muslim community."[64] Even with the battles that were waged between them, the Malay kerajaans maintained the asabiyyah based on faith from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Such solidarities were realized through the agency of the rajas, who used their personal charisma and Islamic rhetoric and symbols to mobilize the masses toward unity based on faith.

Another assertive strategy used by rajas was the sponsoring of missionaries and scholars in other parts of the Malay world. On this score, they took the lead from the kingdoms of Perlak and Pasai, which supported Islamic educational institutions in their kingdoms as places where missionaries and scholars could be trained and dispatched. The teaching of the Arabic language and fine details of Islamic theology and laws was established in almost all Muslim kingdoms in Malaysia by the sixteenth century. Scholarly networks of scholars and missionaries that flowed from mosques, pondoks, and brotherhoods in India, Turkey, and the Arab world worked hand in hand with the Malay Muslims to propagate the message of Islam to the innermost areas of the Malay world.[65] In the Sejarah Melayu, we are informed of a Sufi master Abu Bakar from Makkah who brought a book entitled *Durr al-manzum* (String of Poetic Pearls) to Melaka. He was well received by Sultan Mansur Shah, who instructed the book to be sent to Pasai to be studied.[66] Sultan Mansur Shah and other Malay rulers may well have sent many

foreign missionaries who passed through and resided in their states to other parts of the Malay world. The conversion of the island of Java to Islam, according to the Javanese account in *Babad Tanah Djawi* (History of the Land of Java), was attributed to Sunan Giri, Bonang, and Walilanang. They were among the "Nine Saints of Java" who successfully won over the previously recalcitrant Hindus on that island. These saints were said to have received religious instruction from an Islamic scholar in Melaka during the pinnacle of kerajaan proselytism.[67]

A Tale of Three Kerajaans

All kerajaans contributed in varying degrees to the Islamization of Malaysia and made Islam pervasive and popular from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. A few stood out from the rest, namely, Aceh, Johor, Melaka, Patani, and Brunei. Here we focus on Melaka, Patani, and Brunei, without forgetting the established fact that Aceh and Johor (see Chapter 4) contributed immensely to the shaping of Islam in the Malay world from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Aceh was a leading entrepot, a renowned center for Islamic learning and a conquering power after the fall of Melaka. The kerajaan derived much of its success from welcoming foreign scholars such as Nuruddin Al-Raniri into the kingdom, and it had maintained close ties with major powers in the Muslim world, such as the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals, aside from connections with China. According to Leonard Andaya: "With Islam as a defining feature of Aceh, it became central to all of its institutions. It was during the heyday of Acehnese power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Aceh became the centre of the Malay world and made Islam an indispensable part of Melayu identity."[68] The specter of Aceh and its role in the Islamization of Malaysia has and will continue to linger throughout this book. For now, we turn to the other three kerajaans that were maritime powers in the Malay world and dominated many Muslim and non-Muslim states and societies within their orbits of influence. These kingdoms were active in infusing Islam in the Malay states, employing both strategies discussed earlier to widen their sway over other Muslim and non-Muslim states.

Melaka: The Archetype of Malay Islamic Power

The origins of Islam in Melaka have been widely debated. Some Malaysian historians maintain that the kingdom was first established in 1262 based on recent archaeological findings, fresh readings of old court texts, and doubts about the reliability of external sources.[69] An eminent local historian, Ahmat Adam argued that revisionist historians have committed the exact same flaws they were

trying to undo. The idea that the kingdom of Melaka was founded in 1262, according to Ahmat, was based upon external evidence and the abuse of history for the purposes of *propaganda politik* (political propaganda).[70] Beyond these contestations about the exact dates of Melaka's founding, there is little doubt that the kerajaan began to be a strong and known proponent of Islam only in the early fifteenth century.

Altogether, seven rajas ruled Melaka, beginning with Parameswara, who reigned till 1414, and ending with Mahmud Shah in 1511. They had expansionist ambitions and used subtle and assertive strategies to their utmost advantage. In addition to these strategies, the empire was consolidated through an intricately defined political system and the sending of princes to newly conquered lands. Power was centralized within the rajas' family.[71] The rajas also appointed many capable ministers, governors, and admirals, who brought stability and strength to the kingdom. One famous figure was Tun Perak (1420–1498), whose appointment as *Bendahara* (Prime Minister) during the reign of the fifth Sultan of Melaka, Muzaffar Shah, brought the kingdom to the pinnacle of military might. He ran much of the day-to-day administration of the kingdom and was recorded to have plainly remarked: "The Ruler is not concerned with difficulties we administrators encounter, he only takes account of the good results we achieve."[72] Melaka was able to defeat the Siamese in two landmark battles in Muar, and those victories boosted the respect of nearby kingdoms for Melaka and the Islam it was promoting in the region. Soon enough, Tun Perak devised plans to conquer Pahang and included other nearby polities as part of Melaka's expansionist policy.[73]

Another noteworthy figure who lives on in the imagination of Malaysians today is the enigmatic figure, Hang Tuah, along with his four lieutenants. Films, novels, and short stories have been produced about these warriors, mostly adapted from an eighteenth-century Malay classical text, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Story of Hang Tuah). Critical questions have been raised regarding the ethnic origins of these warriors or whether they even existed. Notwithstanding these historical debates and postulations, the Hikayat Hang Tuah was an oblique reference to Melaka's fighting forces, a testimony of martial spirit of the Malay Muslims then and the absolute loyalty and heroism these warriors showed in the making of the Melakan Empire and the infusion of Islam in the Malay world.[74]

The Islamizing policies of the Melakan kerajaan were further enhanced by its close relationship with China, particularly with Emperor Yung-Lo (1402–1424). An astute statesman, the first king of Melaka Parameswara and successors visited the Ming court in person to solicit and maintain Chinese protection and support for kerajaan commercial and imperial plans. These rulers were probably well acquainted with Emperor Yung-Lo's aspirations of broadening Chinese influence

in the Indian Ocean.[75] They sustained ties with China through the paying of tributes and opened lands in the Melakan city for Chinese traders and settlers. In return, the Ming court sent their emissaries and provided assistance in enhancing Melaka's military. The rapport built with China paved the way for several diplomatic and commercial trips made by the famous Muslim general, Cheng Ho (or Zheng He). Between 1405 and 1433, Cheng Ho visited Melaka a few times and, in the process, aided in the Islamization of the kingdom as well as neighboring states.[76]

Trade and commerce were among the most effective tools used by the rajas to infuse Islam in the region. As a mercantile kingdom, Melaka grew to become the most renowned port in early fifteenth-century Southeast Asia. The kingdom's strategic position coupled with the seasonal winds attracted merchant ships from both Asia and Europe. Muslims from all over the world came to the port, and a substantial number of these merchants came with the ulama, Sufis, and other missionaries. Tomé Pires, a Portuguese travel writer who stayed in Melaka from 1512 to 1515, wrote that

> some rich Moorish merchants move Pase [Pasai] to Malacca, Parsees, as well as Bengalese and Arabian Moors, for at that time there were a large number of merchants belonging to these three nations and they were very rich, with large businesses and fortunes, and they had settled there from the said parts, carrying on their trade; and so having come they brought with them mollahs and priests learned in the sect of Mohammed—chiefly Arabs, who are esteemed in these parts for the knowledge of the said sect.[77]

Pires's observations cut deep into the heart of the Melakan kerajaan's capacity to function as an Islamizing force: the diverse, polyglot, and cosmopolitan population that was ensconced within it.[78] Consisting of scholars, warriors, poets, traders, missionaries, spiritual brotherhoods, and committed followers of Islam, these diverse groups transformed from a backwater village into an Islamicate hub, where Muslims and non-Muslims from varied background traded, interacted, and mingled easily. Some groups dominated specific aspects of Melakan life. The Muslim Gujaratis, Tamils (Kelings), Luzon Muslims, Vietnamese, and Chinese were predominant in trade and mining. There were also pockets of Ethiopians, Swahilis, Burmese, Armenian, Persians, Jews, and Japanese engaging in commercial activities. Arabs contributed much to Islamic scholarship and in molding the spiritual life of the Muslims.[79] Many of the residents of Melaka were actually Javanese. While a segment of these Javanese were merchants, religious scholars, students, and slaves, a great number were mercenaries who converted to Islam upon their arrival in Melaka. They were central to the kingdom's defenses.[80]

Although smaller in number compared to the Javanese, the Tamil Muslims were significant enough that they were able to steer the course of court politics.[81] Due to the presence of these communities, under Sultan Mansur Shah (1459–1477), calligraphic, Jawi, and other literary and artistic productions flourished. Melaka's cultural influence and assertiveness made Malay the lingua franca among locals and even among foreign traders and travelers.[82]

Melaka's success as a Muslim kingdom was also its source of weakness. With wealth and prosperity came power struggles and vicious intrigues in the kerajaan. The demise of able ministers such as Tun Perak ushered mismanagement on the part of the raja, Mahmud Shah, whose lavish lifestyle, favoritism, ruthlessness, lack of respect for religious elites, and immorality cost him the support of loyal warriors, merchants, scholars, and statesmen in his kingdom. Mahmud executed his sibling in a fit of jealousy over a woman he loved and put his uncles and their families to death for disloyalty. His poor management of trading activities caused much frustration and consternation among foreign communities. An Italian traveler reported an incident where merchants were murdered "in cold blood like dogs" some few months before the end of the kerajaan.[83] As a result of this, the Chinese and Javanese cooperated with the Portuguese to launch a sudden attack on Melaka.[84]

At the same time as the Melakan kingdom was declining, the Portuguese were capturing key ports in the Indian Ocean. Before their assault on Melaka, the Portuguese fleets commandeered by Afonso de Albuquerque had already taken over the kingdom of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf in 1507 and then, three years later, the port of Goa in west India. Albuquerque's eyes were set on Melaka, a key port to be captured in order to establish Portuguese trade dominance in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese commander was convinced "that, if this Malacca trade is taken out of their hands, Cairo and Makkah will be completely lost and no spices will go to the Venetians except those that they go to Portugal to buy."[85] Albuquerque was wrong in his prediction that Cairo and Makkah would lose significance or that spice trade would eventually be channeled to Portugal. He was, however, right that the Portuguese could defeat the Melakan forces even with a small fleet under his charge.

On August 25, 1511, a small yet disciplined and well-armed Portuguese force defeated the Melakan forces of 100,000 men. Sultan Mahmud, his family, and followers fled to Pahang, hoping to regroup and launch a counterattack on the Portuguese. That plan never came about. Mahmud died in Pahang a broken man. He came to be remembered as the last raja of Melaka, who was responsible for the downfall of an ancestral kingdom. The Portuguese ruled Melaka for over a century. Mahmud himself witnessed the exodus of scores of Muslims and non-Muslims from Melaka to other parts of the Malay world in the years

to come. The Great Mosque that Mansur built, along with other mosques and graves, were destroyed, and the materials were used to build a fortress, La Formosa.[86] By a twist of fate, Muslim ports in South Sulawesi, Aceh, Johor, Brunei, Patani, and Pahang received an added boost from the commercial activities of Melakan Malays and other foreign merchants who switched their port of call.[87] The rise and fall of Melaka served as a painful lesson for other Malay kerajaans of the imminent threat posed by Western powers. But it would take more than three centuries before European colonialism had a direct impact on Malaysia. Mindful of the errors of their predecessors and determined to carve new histories of their own, the Malay rajas fortified their frontiers and stepped up kerajaan proselytism.[88]

Patani: Balancing Between Two Faiths

Textual and archaeological evidence points to one key fact about Patani: it was a flourishing kingdom that traded gold, pepper, textiles, and foodstuffs since Muslims first ventured there in the eighth century.[89] The Muslim kingdom of Patani was built on a Buddhist kingdom called Langkasuka. Located in the northernmost part of Malaysia, with its first capital based at Kerisik (Kru Se), the Patani kerajaan from the early sixteenth century onward was a cosmopolitan domain in the image of Melaka. Muslims and non-Muslims lived peacefully under Islamic rulers. For that reason, Patani was known by its other designate, "*Darussalam*" (Land of Peace). Indians, Chinese, and Japanese were among the foreign communities who traded in the kingdom together with other Southeast Asians. Many of these foreigners even settled and were buried there.[90]

As a kingdom located between the mandala polity of Ayutthaya and the Islamicized Malay states in the peninsula, Patani was always treading on a tightrope. Its rulers evaded their nemeses by sending tributes in the form of *bunga mas* (golden flowers) to the Siamese, submitting to the position of Ayutthaya's vassal state. At the same time, Patani rajas established kinship as well as religious bonds and trading connections with other Muslim states. Such strategies of survival did not always work to their advantage. Skirmishes with the Siamese broke out from time to time, sometimes initiated by Patani in its attempt to gain complete independence.[91] In other instances, Ayyuthayan kings, who were constantly fretful of Patani's growing reputation as a trading center and an interchange of Islamic scholarly and missionary networks, spilled the first blood. Battles were also fought against the nearby Muslim kerajaans of Kelantan, Johor, Pahang, and Palembang, which were envious of Patani's fame. All of these events and circumstances turned the kingdom into a highly fortified territory while cultivating a martial spirit in its people. Tragedies, wars, and other misfortunes further deepened

their faith in Islam. Patani became a land of warriors and scholars, alternatively warrior-scholars.[92]

There are several highpoints in the history of Islam in Patani, one of which occurred during the reign of the four queens—Raja Ijau, Raja Biru, Raja Ungu, and Raja Kuning—that lasted a little more than a century (1584–1688). These queens wielded substantial political power because Muslim elites were receptive to the idea of women being at the helm of states provided that they were capable, kept their male allies close in their orbit of influence, and did not pose a threat to their interests.[93] (I will explain more about the roles of women in the Islamization of Malaysia in the next chapter.) The queens of Patani were best remembered for their excellent diplomatic skills in dealing with threats confronting the kingdom. Marriage and military alliances with the Pahang and Johor royalty repulsed four Siamese invasions until the mid-seventeenth century. On the domestic front, the queens restored peace and order after an initial period of turbulence during the raja Ijau's rule (1584–1616). Their tenure saw the flowering of Malay-Islamic culture, especially in the areas of the performing and visual arts.[94] Adept in the art of hard bargaining, warm in their approaches to traders, and adroit in keeping their astute lieutenants close and enemies closer, the queens obtained the trust and support of the *orangkaya* (rich merchants), who together ensured the smooth running of trade that the kingdom depended on. Trade was an avenue by which Islam was spread in and out of Patani into many parts of the Malay world and mainland Southeast Asia.[95]

A line of female rulers from Kelantan succeeded the rule of the four queens. They ruled Patani until 1718. Although Patani never returned to the blossoming days of being one of the centers of commerce and the arts in historical Malaysia, it developed instead into a venerable seat of Islamic learning. Patani scholars and migrants who fled their crisis-ridden home towns to reside and study in Makkah formed learned communities that spanned across all parts of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Arab world. These scholars became authorities in various Islamic sciences and trained generations of students who traveled the Indian Ocean to maintain the tradition and vitality of Patani-Islamic scholarly networks.[96] Knowledge and learning were deemed the path to recovering and reviving the eminent kerajaan. That dream never came true. Siam consolidated its power in Patani after a successful campaign against the Burmese in 1785. Patani was invaded the same year, and the land was divided into several smaller vassal states under the suzerainty of the Chakri dynasty.[97]

Brunei: A Creolized Kingdom

There is perhaps no better way to describe the Bruneian kerajaan than as a "creolized kingdom." Upon conversion to Islam, the rajas refashioned their

outlook and made the kingdom a living embodiment of what it meant to be a fusion of many backgrounds and influences. The rajas took on the title of "Sultan Maharaja," a fusion of Arabic and Indic designates for kings. Members of the Bruneian royalty married, among others, daughters of the nearby kerajaans of Johor and Aceh and, more markedly, Chinese from China, as the *Batu Terselah* (Genealogical Tablet) of Brunei had recorded.[98] Relations between Brunei and the Chinese in China stretched many centuries before Islam arrived. Brunei was described in Chinese maps as *Po-li* or *Po-ni*. Chinese–Brunei interactions and exchanges were so strong that tombstones of the rajas were designed and engraved in Guangzhou and then transported back to Brunei. Chinese Muslims who brought these tombstones and traded in Brunei received patronage from the kings, were active in spreading Islam, and intermarried with locals there.[99]

Although an Islamic presence in Brunei could be traced as early as the late thirteenth century, it was only in 1405 that the kerajaan formally converted to Islam, during the reign of Raja Awang Alak Betatar. He was married to the daughter of the raja of Johor and took on the hybrid title of "Paduka Seri Sultan Muhammad Shah." Muhammad Shah's conversion to Islam welcomed the coming Arab missionaries into Brunei. Brunei rajas remained open to other religions, so much so that the Portuguese traveler Antonio Pigafetta (1491–1534) wrote that they could be "easily converted to the faith of Jesus Christ."[100] Pigafetta was proven wrong. Intermarriages between Arab sayyids and members of the royalty brought about a new line of creole Islamic elites whose feet were firmly planted in Brunei but whose eyes were set on linking the kingdom to the wider Islamic world. Among these creole Islamic elites was Sharif Ali (also called Sultan Berkat), who was remembered as the builder of many mosques. He used his links to establish Brunei as a center for missionary work in other parts of Borneo and the Sulu islands. Together with the matrimonial links with regional kingdoms and with Ming China, the Brunei rajas were at the forefront of kerajaan proselytism in Malaysia after the fall of Melaka. Islam became a dominant religion in Southern Philippines in part due to the missionizing efforts of the Brunei kerajaan.[101]

Sultan Berkat's successors continued the work of infusing Islam from the early fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. Their motivations probably varied from obtaining more wealth by expanding and tapping on Muslim networks to arresting the spread of Catholicism. The Spanish launched a number of fierce attacks against the Brunei kerajaan, the most iconic of which was in 1578, which resulted in the brief sacking of the raja. The kerajaan quickly recovered from the attack and rebuilt the kingdom into what could be considered the golden age of the Bruneian empire.[102] Brunei was one of the stopover ports for traders and was the logical choice due to its location facing the South China Sea. Camphor was the most sought-after raw material then, and the best was found in Brunei. The

kerajaan was also one of the main exporters of food products, pearls, shells, slaves, and gold. By the late sixteenth century, the Kota Batu settlement in Brunei was a trading nucleus described by visitors and traders as the "Water City" or "Venice of the Far East."[103] In addition to being a haven for traders, Brunei was a place of refuge for Muslims oppressed by both Muslim and non-Muslim kingdoms. The sultans protected and even honored non-Muslim communities and visitors, allowing them to establish settlements and live peacefully alongside the already Islamized natives. Because of the openness of the Bruneian kerajaan and easy mixing between peoples of all races, the genetic makeup of Bruneian for many centuries has been creolized and diverse.[104]

By the late seventeenth century, seeds of decline and decay were evident in the kerajaan. Sultan Muhammad Ali was a brash and unpopular figure. His poor management of the kingdom invited a revolt staged by local chiefs that eventually led to his murder in 1662. The leader of the revolt, Bendahara Abdul Mobin, proclaimed himself as the new raja, which sparked a civil war between his faction and supporters of the nephew of the murdered king, Raja Muhidin. Months of conflict between the two sides sapped their manpower and laid the kingdom's resources to waste. Instability and uncontrolled piracy deterred merchants and traders from Bruneian ports. Even though the rightful Brunei royalty was eventually reinstated and the kerajaan remained firmly in place, it could not regain the vastness of the empire in its peak, nor could it continue to be the authoritative agent of Islamization. By the early eighteenth century, Brunei's territories were taken over by the Sulu Sultanate.[105]

In conclusion, kerajaan proselytism complemented and, in some ways, outshined other forms of Islamization during the gradualist phase. The rajas employed many resources, networks, and ideological tools to infuse Islam in Malaysia. Their efforts paid off. By the eighteenth century, Islam had been infused into all states in Malaysia and the sovereigns were all Muslims. Only Sabah and Sarawak maintained non-Muslims as their rulers and chiefs, but they were friendly to Muslims that continued to maintain a presence through familial ties and trading connections that intersected in the Sulu archipelago and other parts of Borneo. The kerajaans in Malaysia continued until the nineteenth century even though their roles in the infusion of Islam ebbed as they confronted new challenges posed by European colonialism. Regardless of their successes and failings, virtues and faults, the rajas left behind in the memories of their descendants the craft of propagating Islam and the art of building cosmopolitan kingdoms.

4

Women and Other Islamizers

ANYONE STROLLING IN the markets of Kelantan cannot fail to notice the ubiquitous presence of women in the world of business. Women dominate the selling of food, textiles, cosmetics, and other products at every heart of state's capital, Kota Bharu, so much so that one is left wonder about the contributions of men to the economy of the state. So deeply rooted has been the dominance of women that during my visit there some years ago, a local female government officer explained to me: "Women in Kelantan are generally independent. They manage their own money and own their own properties. It's an established tradition here." Probing further, I found out that many Kelantanese women regarded a figure by the name of Siti Wan Kembang as their icon. Myths and legends surrounding her life and deeds still linger in the minds of many women there and other parts of Malaysia as a testimony to women's contribution to Islamization.[1]

The roles of women in infusing Islam in Malaysia form the crux of this chapter. Aside from traders, Sufis, and rajas, other agents contributed immensely during the populist phase of Islamization. A notable number of women served as heads of state, and thereby facilitated missionary work and sponsorship of scholars. In bringing to light women's contributions to Islamization, I focus my attention on the career of a well-known figure, Siti Wan Kembang. Then I place into sharp relief scholars who, through their teachings and scholarly networks, helped to disseminate the teachings of Islam in Malaysia. Tok Pulau Manis (real name: Syaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah) was one of a pantheon of such scholars. Next, I turn to the Chinese as Islamizers in Malaysia. My angle of vision is directed to Admiral Cheng Ho and the ways in which his diplomatic trips had implicit missionizing ends. These figures pushed the frontiers of Islamization in Malaysia further and represented three important groups: women, scholars, and foreigners.

Women of Power

Siti Wan Kembang was not the first or the only woman to contribute to the infusion of Islam in Malaysia. Both elite and non-elite Malay women have contributed in varying capacities. The Malay Islamic hikayats, as Ruzy Hashim has expertly shown, portray women as anything but passive. They consented when rajas and other powerful figures did what was best for Islam and society. But women were also subtle dissenters against tyrannical rajas. The authors of the hikayats acknowledged women's agency. These texts point to the fact that the authority of the Malay Muslim rajas could not have been sustained without the contributions of women.[2] Archaeological research further supports the importance of women in Islamization. Gravestones found at Leran in Java reveal the existence of a Muslim woman named Siti Fatimah binti Maimun bin Hibatullah. Much has been speculated about her life and origins. One theory has it that she was a princess and probably a missionary, as indicated by the word *shahid* (martyr) inscribed on her gravestone. Other scholars have hypothesized that she might have originated from Champa and come to Java with traders and missionaries. Whatever her background might have been, the discovery of her tomb indicates that women have participated in one way or another in popularizing Islam.[3]

To be sure, Muslim women have become sovereigns or were otherwise significant in shaping politics and power play in the Malay world. The case of the queens of Patani who ruled from 1584 to 1688 best illustrates this point. During their reign, Patani was transformed into a flourishing kingdom, attracting traders and merchants from a number of continents. The queens displayed sophistication in strengthening Patani militarily such that they were able to repulse a number of attacks by the Siamese. A bloody conflict involving Japanese merchants was effectively quelled.[4] Because of the stability that prevailed for many decades under these queens, Patani was populous and achieved notable achievements in the realms of scholarship, performing arts, architecture, martial arts, and literary production, setting the standard in these areas for the rest of Malaysia.[5]

The queens of Patani were not alone in helming kingdoms and structuring power in the Malay world. After the fourteenth century, six of the thirty-two rajas in the Bugis state of Bone were females. From 1404 to 1434, the kingdom of Pasai was governed by two consecutive queens. Meanwhile, in Jepara the northern part of central Java, Ratna Kalinyamat established a new kingdom in the third quarter of the seventeenth century and asserted its independence from the powerful Demak Sultanate. In Southeast Borneo from 1608 to 1650, female rulers enhanced the prestige of the diamond-exporting Sukadana kingdom. Around the same time, in Jambi, a Bugis slave by the name To Ayo transgressed local customs and married the crown prince. She negotiated her way through the hostile court

environment, rising to become the one of the three female rulers that transformed Jambi into a wealthy and independent state.[6] Although no significant queens reigned from the eighteenth century onward, the women behind the throne were no less influential. They protested against the installation of princes who were not to their liking, organized palace coups, and were complicit in assassinations of men in positions of authority. A Malay proverb captures the cunning of some women well when it likened them to *kain dalam lipatan* (concealed cloth). Their moves may be subtle and hidden from public view, but when they strike at their enemies, their sting can be fatal.[7]

Women took on other public functions related to Islam and the development of Muslim communities. They were religious teachers, storytellers, and performers in Islamic genres of the creative arts. A significant number become merchants and ship owners, who used trade and commerce to spread the message of Islam. A leading persona in the utilization of business for da'wah purposes was Nyai Gede Pinatih from Gresik. Of Chinese and Cham descent, she was a syahbandar who owned many ships in the early sixteenth century. Nyai Gede was the foster mother of Sunan Giri, a revered saint of Java and his chief supporter and financier in the proselytization of Javanese Hindus. Her role in Islamizing Java is memorialized by a mausoleum in Gresik that attracted Muslim pilgrims for many centuries.[8]

Appointed as envoys and ambassadors, Muslim women were frequently dispatched to negotiate trade deals, broker peace, and negotiate treaties with neighboring Muslim and non-Muslim polities. The Portuguese traveler Fernao Mendes Pinto (1509–1583) observed that women in the Malay world were better envoys and ambassadors because they were endowed with the gift of tact and tenderness not found in most men at the time.[9] Many women joined the ranks of warriors who fought in wars and military campaigns. Sultan al-Mukammil (1584–1604) of Aceh, for example, appointed a woman as the admiral of his navy. Remembered for her inventive naval fighting tactics, Laksamana Keumalahayati (1550–1615) commandeered many major battles. These women were highly trained in the martial arts and weapon handling. The most skillful among them were the personal bodyguards of the rajas, known in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Sumatra as "Keumala Cahaya" divisions. For their valor in the face of danger, these women were described with a glorious term of Sanskrit origin, *Srikandi* (or Seri Kandi, meaning heroines).[10]

That women made headway in so many important professions in the Malay world and maintained a high status in the period of populist Islamization deserves further elaboration. Previous scholars have brought our attention to the temperaments and charisma of women, how adept they were in carrying out the many occupations entrusted to them, as well as the Malay adat that empowered

women while permitting them to take on public roles. Less attention has been given to Malay interpretations and understandings of Islam as well as global Islamic history, which made them more open in accepting women taking up important social, economic, and political positions. Mentioned in many verses of the Qur'an, the famed Queen of Sheba ("Balkis" of "Balqis" in Arabic and in Malay) was known to the Malays, and she was included in the hikayats. The *Tuhfat Al-Nafis* (The Precious Gift) and *Hikayat Mareskalek* (Story of Mareskalek) narrated that the Bugis kings were descended from the marriage between Solomon and the Balqis. The *Hikayat Nabi Sulaiman* (Story of Prophet Solomon), in turn, told the story of how Balqis was placed under the spell of jinns. One other famous text that was solely dedicated to the mythical adventures of the Queen of Sheba but with the use of Minangkabau metaphors and rhythmic couplets was entitled *Hikayat Puteri Balqis* (Story of the Queen of Sheba).[11] These hikayats were read aloud to the Malays and inevitably shaped their ideas about the acceptability of appointing women rulers. It would not be far-fetched to argue that during the populist phase of Islamization, Malays were already exposed to the stories and legends of other famous queens and legendary women in the Muslim world at large.

Although heads of state were usually men and dynasties followed the venerable rules of patrilineal descent, the ulama in the Malay world had no reservations regarding female premiership. In Sumatra, for example, the ulama were tolerant toward the local adat, which upheld matrilocal customs and matrilineality. In Islamic jurisprudence that has been held onto by the ulama for over a millennium, an established maxim states: *al 'adatu muhakkamah* (custom is a basis of law). In other words, local customs ought to be respected and upheld when such customs are compatible with the spirit of the shari'a.[12] The ulama in the Malay world were certainly aware of this maxim and therefore endorsed the appointment of queens insofar as these rulers championed kerajaan proselytism and preserved the sanctity of Islamic laws and norms. A case in point was Nuruddin Al-Raniri, who supported the appointment of one of Aceh's four queens, Sultanah Tajul Alam Safiyyatudin (1641–1675). A strict Muslim and shari'a-minded Sufi who condemned wayward Sufis as heretics, he did not, however, question the legality of the Sultanah's appointment and even wrote some influential treatises under her patronage.[13] Wazir Karim underlines the support given by the ulama to sovereign women: "Yet, in early Malay history, the Islamization of the Malay states did not reduce women's power in any significant way and indeed in colonial history appeared to be a source of power for women for granting them an intellectual base for political activity."[14] Wazir's point, however, needs to be counterbalanced by the reality that, under Islamic rule, women did experience some forms of unequal treatment. Women captured in battles

were enslaved and were also badly treated by men from all levels of the Muslim society. Until the twentieth century, common women were not admitted to formal Islamic educational institutions. Many women in the Malay world were the objects of sexual pleasure and victims of oppression. The Islamic ideal of honoring women and treating them with respect was in no doubt transgressed by Muslim kings and the layman who endorsed masculinist practices, beliefs, and attitudes.[15]

It is in light of these developments in local Islamic thought and practices that we can understand why Siti Wan Kembang was appointed the first female ruler of Kelantan. Siti Wan Kembang was not a forgotten sovereign, as Fatima Mernissi described the many queens in Islamic history.[16] She was endorsed by men and remembered affectionately many years after her voluntary abdication of the throne. Oral traditions and folk tales provide us with fragments about her purported deeds while revealing to us how female figures during the populist phase of Islamization have left an indelible mark on the imagination of present-day Malaysians and, more so, upon the Kelantanese. Among the alternative names of the state of Kelantan today is "Negeri Che Siti Wan Kembang." Hence, whether Siti Wan Kembang's actual life could be supported by credible historical sources is not as important as her persistent presence in the minds of the Malays. Still, as the oral historian Jan Vansina has beautifully cautioned: "The historian must always be on the lookout for unconscious distortions, as well as for the obvious alterations which might have been introduced for fun, profit, or esteem. Suspicions should be aroused as soon as characters conform to ideal types."[17] What follows is an attempt to humanize and demystify Siti Wan Kembang without in any way reducing her historical importance.

Siti Wan Kembang (1585–?) was the daughter of Sultan Ahmad (1548–1589), who at his passing left no sons. She was only four years of age when her father died and was placed under the care of Raja Hussein of Johor, who took charge of the Kelantanese kingdom. His reign was interrupted by Siamese attacks in 1603, and severe losses of men made it impossible for him to regain full control of the kingdom, which soon split into many smaller principalities.[18] Constant wars with the Siamese brought about problems of proper documentation. A British colonial officer who studied Kelantan's early history remarked:

> The early history of Kelantan is lost in obscurity, owing to the fact no records have ever been kept. This is possibly due to the fact that everybody was too busy, engaged in local wars, to have time for any records; on the other hand, if records had been in existence, those have probably been lost, or destroyed by the victorious parties, for reasons obvious.[19]

The records on and the career of Siti Wan Kembang must have suffered from such a predicament. But oral traditions kept memories of her tenure as a queen very much alive.

Siti Wan Kembang was coronated in 1610 with much pomp, splendor, and the introduction of Malay competitive sports such as the *gasing* (Malay spinning top) that soon became popular throughout other Malay states.[20] Because of constant wars and skirmishes with the Siamese and encroachments from Patani and Terengganu, Siti Wan Kembang ruled over a relatively small kingdom. Her locus of power was centered at Gunung Chinta Wangsa, at Kuala Kerai. No Siamese records recounted attacks made on her kingdom. This, coupled with Siti Wan Kembang rule that stretched for fifty-seven years (1610–1667), suggests that she was able to fend off various threats through either diplomacy or tribute.[21] Possibly for the same reason, she was never married. A master tactician who was perhaps conscious that marriage with another powerful ruler would diminish her position in a context filled with adversaries, remaining single gave Siti Wan Kembang the time and space she needed to build her own power base. Comparisons can be made between her and Catherine the Great of Russia. Both chose to be single, at least officially, in order to focus fully on consolidating their rule.[22]

Siti Wan Kembang followed in the footsteps of the queens of Patani by building her kingdom around trading networks, which was, at the same time, a medium to spread Islam in the Malay states. Among Arab traders and merchants, she was referred to as "Paduka Siti," a title usually given to a highly respected monarch. She hosted and provided protection to textile traders who brought cloth from India, China, Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia. These raw products were woven to become high-quality Kelantanese-styled batik and *songket*, which were then exported to other countries. It was during Siti Wan Kembang's era that Kelantan developed into a trading center and a hub of the handloom weaving industry, steered largely by women until the late twentieth century.[23]

After more than half a century of uninterrupted rule, Siti Wan Kembang abdicated her throne in favor of her adopted daughter, Puteri Saadong. Saadong's life story, tragic as it was, was documented in three texts, *Riwayat Kelantan* (History of Kelantan), *Hikayat Puteri Saadong* (Story of Princess *Saadong*), and *Hikayat Seri Kelantan* (Story of Seri Kelantan). Unlike her stepmother, Saadong ruled for four years before she was abducted by the Siamese and made a concubine of the king. This event marked the end of female rule in Kelantan. Local folk tales have it that Saadong finally returned to Kelantan only to find that her husband, Raja Abdullah, had remarried soon after her abduction. An argument ensued, which led Saadong to stab Raja Abdullah. Saadong then disappeared mysteriously. In another version of Saadong's life story, Raja Abdullah decapitated her after a heated argument. Saadong was, however, brought to life when fragrant

water kept by Siti Wan Kembang was sprinkled onto her body.[24] These incredible tales notwithstanding, Siti Wan Kembang never quite faded away from the imagination of the Malays in Malaysia. She is regarded as an exemplar of women's accomplishments in the Islamization of Malaysia.[25]

Islamizing Minds

> Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. The angels lower their wings in approval of the seeker of knowledge, and everyone in the heavens and on earth prays for forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea. The superiority of the scholar over the worshipper is like the superiority of the moon above all other heavenly bodies. The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, for the Prophets did not leave behind a Dinar or Dirham, rather they left behind knowledge, so whoever takes it has taken a great share.[26]

Read, transcribed, transmitted, and memorized since the early centuries of Islam up to the present, this hadith has been the source of motivation for students and scholars from all over the Muslim world to tread on the path of knowledge and to contribute to the advancement of Islamic scholarship. To deepen their knowledge of Islam, budding Muslim scholars would travel to faraway places and sit under the feet of masters of various branches of the faith. Seekers of Islamic knowledge endured the pangs and pains of poverty in addition to the inconveniences of constant movement as they learned from one teacher after another. But the will to become part of the *ulama* (scholar) class, to be the inheritors of the Prophets and to gain social mobility, meant that radical sacrifices had to be made.[27] One scholar from the Malay world who spent much of his life on this thorny path in search of Islamic knowledge was Syaikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah (1650–1736), also known as "Tok Pulau Manis."

An Arab of Baghdadi descent, Tok Pulau Manis was born in Terengganu into a family and network of Muslim scholars who traveled to and lived in all corners of Malaysia for the sole purpose of infusing Islam among the locals. Although local Islamic scholarship in the Malay states flowered much later in the thirteenth century, Malay-Muslim scholars had begun to make long voyages to centers of Islamic learning in Makkah and Madinah to fulfil their hajj and visits to holy sites. Some would stay for extended periods, adding to the growing numbers of the Malay Muslims in the holy lands. Natives of the Malay world were referred to by Arabs as the *Ashab al-Jawiyyin*, or *Jawi* in short. Scholars and missionaries grew out of the Jawi community. Many would eventually return to the Malay

states to further the cause of da'wah non-Muslims and islah of local Muslims understanding of Islam.[28]

By the sixteenth century, the ulama who returned to Terengganu had formed a network of educational institutions with other scholars in Kelantan, Kedah, and Patani. The ulama wrote religious treatises in the Jawi script called *kitab kuning* (yellow book) and taught these texts in mosques, palaces, and homes. In doing so, they hastened the replacement of the Pallava script read by the Malay literati to Jawi. The Jawi-Islamic treatises were organic texts. A scholar would write commentaries of a famous treatise in the margins, and these commentaries would then form the substance of a separate book. Among the recurrent topics that the ulama in the Malay world wrote about were *Aqidah* (Theology), *Tafsir* (Quranic Exegesis), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Hadith* (Prophetic Traditions), and *Tasawwuf* (Sufism). Most Jawi treatises were translations of and commentaries on influential Arabic and, sometimes, Persian books.[29] Armed with these texts, the ulama worked hand in hand with the rajas to found Islamic education institutions in the Malay states. Tok Pulau Manis received his early Islamic education from these ulama, one of whom was his father, Syaikh Abdullah bin Syaikh Abdul Qahar.[30]

Before making the long journey into the heartlands of Islam, Malay seekers of Islamic knowledge who desired more grounding in the rudiments of the Arabic language and other Islamic sciences would stop over at Aceh, known then as *Serambi Makkah* (Verandah of Makkah) due its reputation as the center of Islamic scholarship. There they were tutored by ulama of varying backgrounds, most of whom took on important positions in the courts of the rajas.[31] In the 1670s, Tok Pulau Manis advanced his studies under the tutelage of Abdul Rauf Al-Sinkili (1615–1693) in Aceh. A Sufi scholar who succeeded Nuruddin Ar-Raniri as the Syaikhul Islam in the Acehnese court, Abdul Rauf was a student of a prominent scholar in Makkah, Ibrahim Al-Kurani (1616–1689). It was plausibly through Abdul Rauf's encouragement that Tok Pulau Manis proceeded to study for almost a decade with Al-Kurani. Although devotedly Sufi in orientation, Al-Kurani's theological views were in line with the Islamic reformists Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (1292–1350). He defended the views of both scholars against the many detractors of his time. Al-Kurani believed that Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim's views were crucial in any scholar's attempt to renew and revive Islamic thought in an era of intellectual stagnation.[32]

Al-Kurani exerted a strong intellectual influence on Tok Pulau Manis, and through his teacher Tok Pulau Manis was also introduced to the Makkan circles of revivalist ulama, whose knowledge and spiritual networks stretched into North Africa, South Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula. The ulama and their students were members of Sufi brotherhoods, namely the Khalwatiyya, Naqshbandiyya,

Shadhiliyya, Suhrawardiyya, Qadiriyya, and Shattariyya. Tok Pulau Manis was initiated into the Shattariyya brotherhood popular in West Sumatra and Java since the seventeenth century.[33] Upon Al-Kurani's demise, Tok Pulau Manis returned to Terengganu. In a move to secure his position within the inner circles of the kerajaan, Tok Pulau Manis married his daughter to Sultan Zainal Abidin (1677–1733). In exchange he was included as part of the sultan's council of advisers and was among the few religious scholars empowered to issue fatwa on issues affecting Muslims in Terengganu. He also founded several pondoks at Kampung Pulau Manis and taught at a mosque in that locality. His real name was soon forgotten as he became identified with the place where he spent most of his life and where he was regarded as a leading Islamic scholar.[34]

An erudite scholar, Tok Pulau Manis wrote and translated several works that were to leave a permanent mark on the history of Islam of Malaysia.[35] His most lasting contribution was the first commentary of the *Al-Hikam*, a collection of Sufi aphorisms written by the Egyptian jurist Abu al-Fadl Ibn 'Ata Allah al-Iskandari (658–709). Tok Pulau Manis may have been driven by several motives in his decision to translate this Arabic tome into the Malay language. The first was to infuse Islam through wise sayings with little reference to laws and legal codes or rules and regulations stipulated by Islam. This was an approach used by Sufis across the Malay world as a means to reach out to Muslims and non-Muslims in an age when they were enamored with mysticism, metaphysics, and theosophy.[36] The Al-Hikam covered themes pertaining to ethics, divinity, the environment, and knowledge. Tok Pulau Manis's second source of motivation might have been the Sufi tradition he shared with Ibn 'Ata Allah and the reverence he had for the latter. Ibn 'Ata Allah was the third *murshid* (spiritual guide) of the Shadhiliyya Sufi order. He was regarded as a scholar of transhistorical importance and a saint who should be remembered, studied, and interpreted for posteriority.[37]

Tok Pulau Manis's book was thus not a straightforward, word-by-word, translation of the Al-Hikam. He was introducing an early Sufi treatise to a Malay audience. Through Tok Pulau Manis's pen, the Al-Hikam underwent a double process of rendition: translation from the Arabic language to Jawi Malay and translation from the nuances of the original text to idioms and vocabularies discernable to the Malays. The Malay term for this dual process of translation and commentary was *syarah*, which was drawn from the same Arabic word, meaning to explicate or to elucidate. Tok Pulau Manis's attempt to make the book relevant for the Malays can be seen in the change in the original title of "Al-Hikam" to "Kitab Hikam Melayu." "Kitab" was placed in beginning to buttress the authoritativeness of the text. This was a rhetorical strategy used by Muslim scholars at that time to differentiate between historical and/or literary works such as the hikayats and works that were scholarly in nature.[38] The word "Melayu" (Malay) was probably

inserted by his students or later transmitters of the book. It was placed at the end of the title to inform the reader that, although the book originated from the Arab world, it was redacted and explained for the benefit of the Malays.

Tok Pulau Manis made this dual process of translation known to his readers. He wrote the following in the preface to Kitab Hikam Melayu:

> I have been asked by some of my fellow travellers [in the Sufi path] to translate this book into Jawi so as to bring benefit to the *mubtadi'*. Finally, I agreed to commit to such undertaking in accordance to the understanding that Allah Almighty has given me. And I have lengthened my commentaries to fulfil the obligation of making it easy for the *mubtadi'* to discern. I seek assistance only from God the Glorified and Exalted and gain benefit from the learned in this world and the hereafter with the blessings of the Master of all Messengers, his family and all of his companions.[39]

Sufi scholars used the term *mubtadi'* to refer to Muslims who were new followers or novices of the tariqahs.[40] Tok Pulau must have shared the same understanding. He was aware that Islamization in the Malay world in the seventeenth century was not as extensive as he desired it to be and that many Malays still had limited understanding of the inner dimensions of Islam. Kitab Hikam Melayu was Tok Pulau Manis's way of bringing Malays into the path of pure Islam as outlined by a great Sufi. In this, he shared the visions of Malay Muslim scholars and other writers during the gradualist phase of Islamization in Malaysia. Their main aim, as Yusof Talib observes, was to rework and, wherever necessary, replace the Hindu-Buddhist literatures and belief systems with those that were in tandem with the spirit of Islam. The new wave of Islamic writings consisted of

> translations, reworkings, and adaptations from Arabic and Persian works to educate and edify: textbooks of Arabic grammar, commentaries, translations of Qur'anic *tajwid* (the art of reciting the sacred text), religious biographies, philosophical treatises and tracts dealing with theological matters, law and mysticism—short, with any aspect of Islamic spiritual and temporal life.[41]

To make his translation and commentaries more discernible and appealing to his readers, Tok Pulau Manis employed local dialects to make his points. In explaining that the life in this world is a journey that would eventually lead mankind to the hereafter no matter what paths they choose to take, Tok Pulau Manis likened it to saying "of the people of the North [of Malaysia]: Pi mai pi mai tang tu juga (Come here, go there, back one full circle in the end)."[42]

Tok Pulau Manis's works went beyond questions of ethics and spirituality. In his book, *Kayfiyyah Al-Niyyah* (The Science of Intentions), he touched on the importance of Islamic jurisprudence in any Muslim endeavor to practice tasawwuf. The shari'a and Sufism, to him, were not two separate aspects of Islam. Exoteric and esoteric dimensions of Islam intersect, influence, and are in need of one another. The lasting impression that his teacher had made on him can be clearly seen this text, a compilation of quotations by Ibrahim Al-Kurani, who, in turn, drew from the writings of Imam al-Ghazali.[43]

Al-Kurani's influence on Tok Pulau Manis could be seen in another highly influential book. In *Kitab al-Kifayah* (The Book of Sustenance), written in 1726, a more legalistic and reformist side of Tok Pulau Manis becomes apparent. Now considered to be the earliest Islamic legal treatise written by a Malay scholar in Malaysia, there is good reason to believe that the ideas in the book were disseminated extensively to the other Malay states through students who graduated from pondoks in Terengganu. Its contents were avowedly Shafi'ite in substance and methodology.[44] Tok Pulau Manis divided the book into twelve chapters consisting of articles of faith, pillars of Islam, factors leading to apostasy, on purification, prayer, fasting, *zakat* (tithe), on the conduct of funerals, animal sacrifice for the birth of a child, on slaughtering animals, and permissible as well as impermissible food. Although he drew upon many of the works of Arab scholars from the Shafi'ite jurisprudence, his discussions on these various topics were tailored to the customs of Malays. The practices and cultures of masses were important to Tok Pulau Manis's consideration and formulation of legal rulings.[45]

The title of the book and the choice of topics were telling of Tok Pulau Manis's approach in infusing Islam. To him, anyone with sufficient knowledge of these fundamental facets of Islam would be able to live their life as a good Muslim. Interestingly, Tok Pulau Manis left out the pilgrimage to Makkah in his list of topics. It could be that he was aware that most Malay Muslims during his day and age would not be able to make the long journey to the holy city and that not fulfilling such obligation did not make one a lesser Muslim. The inclusion of the topic on apostasy, on the other hand, was Tok Pulau Manis's way of keeping Muslims within the sphere of Islam while admonishing them of the many rituals and beliefs that might lead to apostasy. To be sure, Tok Pulau Manis was writing in a milieu when knowledge of Islam among the masses was rather superficial. Superstitions and pagan practices such as *puja pantai* (a mass ceremony to appease sea spirits) were rampant and persisted into the twentieth century.[46]

Moreover, Islam as it was understood at the village level during the precolonial period revolved around the mosques and *surau* (prayer houses) run by local committees and *imams* (prayer leaders). The imams would collect the zakat and provided guidance on religious matters other than teaching the kitab kuning.[47]

Probably with such contextual challenges in mind, Tok Pulau Manis's *Kitab al-Kifayah* was written in a concise way for ease of understanding. Verses from the Qur'an and hadith were kept to a minimum. Even when cited, the provenance of these verses and prophetic sayings was not given so as to make the text easy reading. Tok Pulau Manis knew that Malays then were an oral society.[48] As Amin Sweeney put it, until the nineteenth century, the Malays maintained "radically oral manuscript cultures" where texts were read aloud. To obtain a full hearing from the masses, authors of these texts wrote in ways that were poetic yet impactful, terse yet memorable. Tok Pulau Manis's writings were an embodiment of that prose style.[49]

Tok Pulau Manis died in 1736, leaving a generation of students and disciples who spread his teachings and writings to the rest of Malaysia. His contributions to Islamization must be seen against the many generations and networks of scholars who worked alongside rulers and other Muslims in making Islam more popular. The knowledge and educational institutions he had established were noteworthy achievements that have not been forgotten. A towering figure, his grave is still visited by Malay Muslims from all over the Malay world. These age-old sites serve as a reminder that a local Terengganu scholar of Arab descent erected an intellectual edifice for Muslims in Malaysia to practice fully and further promote their faith.

The Emissary as Missionary

The contributions of the Chinese in infusing Islam in Malaysia have yet to gain the pride of place they deserve in textbooks and scholarly writings. Such has been the legacy of colonialism in the Malay world—ethnic categories became ossified and intertwined with religious identities so that Islam has been cast as a Malay religion. Chinese Muslims, in this racialized logic and constricted analytical lens, were deemed outsiders from the Malay faith, excluded from censuses and official documentation. As antagonism against the Chinese sharpened in the heat of the Malayan Emergency that lasted from 1948 until 1960, the term *cina kafir* (unbelieving Chinese) gained currency in the writings of many scholars and writers and in the rhetoric of many postcolonial politicians. Today, as a Chinese Muslim activist, Taufiq Yap Yun Hin, maintains, it is difficult to undo the notion among many Malaysians that the Chinese are nothing less than kafir.[50] Such ethnicization of Islam had led to the sidestepping of the work of many notable Chinese (and other non-Malays) in Malaysian history who were avowedly Muslim.[51] In truth, non-Malays had a hand in the Islamization of Malay society. One Chinese Muslim figure that forces us to rethink the roles of the non-Malays or foreigners in Malaysia's Islamic pasts was Admiral Cheng Ho (1371–1433/1435)(See Figure 4.1).



FIGURE 4.1 Disembarkation point of Cheng Ho in 1405

Cheng Ho was not the only globe-trotting Chinese Muslim who made his way to the Malay world. As early as 1281, the emperor of the Yuan dynasty in China sent two Chinese Muslim (also known as "Hui") emissaries, Sulaiman and Shamsuddin, to Sumatra to forge trading and diplomatic links. This was the start of two decades of successive waves of Chinese Muslim travel from Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, and Canton into the Malay world. They stayed largely in Java in towns such as Gresik, Tuban, and Surabaya and in Palembang, Sumatra. These Chinese Muslims soon became subjects of local rajas. Some amassed so much wealth and influence that they were able to establish or assist in the founding of sultanates in Java. Others, as seen earlier in the case of Nyai Gede Pinatih, made significant contributions after the missionary work in the Malay world. One of the nine saints of Java, Raden Patah, was a Chinese Muslim. Sunan Gunung Jati in turn married a Chinese woman and incorporated aspects of Chinese culture as part of his identity and proselytizing activities.[52]

By the advent of the Ming dynasty in 1368, Muslims had secured a number of important positions in the Chinese court. Serving as soldiers, eunuchs, and merchants, these Muslims were trusted to pursue the emperor's expansionist policies. Many joined expeditions to numerous parts of Asia.[53] By the fifteenth century, Chinese official documents and travel writers like Ma Huan recorded the existence of sizable Chinese Muslim communities in several parts of the Malay world, including Melaka. These settlements were endowed with relative autonomy by the rajas. Cheng Ho's travels to the Malay world further expanded the localized Chinese Muslims' prominence in both politics and commerce.[54]

What differentiated Cheng Ho from the Chinese Muslims that came before him was that he was the first highly decorated admiral from a non-Muslim polity to have been sent on a diplomatic mission to the Malay world. Cheng Ho was born with the name "Ma San-pao" in 1371 into an influential and rich Muslim family in Yunnan. His ancestors may have originated from Bukhara in Central Asia and belonged to the lineage of Arab migrants that can be traced to the family of Prophet Muhammad. Highly religious but friendly to the non-Muslim Chinese, Cheng Ho's forebears rose to high positions during the Yuan dynasty. Cheng Ho himself received instruction in the Islamic sciences at a very early age, and this may explain why his faith remained intact even under non-Muslim custodianship for the large part of his life.[55] At the age of ten or eleven years old, Cheng Ho was captured, castrated, and trained to be a eunuch in the Yuan court. He was given the name "Cheng Ho" by a prince in the Ming court in recognition of his intelligence and bravery in the face of battle. By 1404, Cheng Ho was appointed admiral of the largest fleet in China's history. The long yet landmark journeys under his stewardship covered thirty countries. Through his seven epic voyages (1405–1433), Cheng Ho established China's position as the most powerful Asian polity at that time while expanding the empire's commercial reach. Cheng Ho's knowledge of the Arabic language and his personal piety certainly helped in his dealings with Muslims he met at the many coastal cities along the Indian Ocean and in the Malay world.[56]

True to his faith, Cheng Ho capitalized on these trips to quicken the pace of Islamization. But how did Cheng Ho achieve this? His own persona was already a medium of Islamization. That a Muslim could rise to such a high position in the naval forces of a major power of that time might have impressed locals in Malaysia about the promise of being a Muslim. This, coupled with the fact that more than two dozen of Cheng Ho's troops were Hui Muslims, one of which was his deputy, Wang Jinghong (?–1434), added to the impression that being Muslim was not an impediment to being influential in the eyes of the Chinese emperor. The sheer size of Cheng Ho's fleet bolstered his larger-than-life image as a Muslim. The ships measured 400 feet in length and 180 feet in width, among the largest in the world at that time. There were altogether 27,800 men and 62 vessels.[57] As Tan Ta Sen noted, given "the strong Muslim presence of the fleet . . . it is possible that there was an unstated implicit message, which was to propagate Islam in insular Southeast Asia."[58] Cheng Ho did not only bring Islam to the local Malay population through his personal efforts. His own non-Muslim Chinese troops embraced Islam upon encounters and marriages with Malay Muslims and, in time, they too contributed to the infusion of Islam.[59]

Aside from this indirect way of infusing Islam, Cheng Ho made his presence felt in the mosques that he and his deputies constructed across the Malay world.

Most of these mosques were based in Java and Sumatra; through these mosques, missionary activities were carried out that spilled over to the Malay Peninsula and the Philippines. The Chinese Muslim communities in the Malay world grew as a result of these mosques. Cheng Ho's patronage of the Muslims in Java also helped the reputed nine saints of Java carry out their missionizing work. These Sufis had many disciples and networks that flowed in and out of Malaysia.[60]

The visits made by Cheng Ho provided the much-needed security that Melaka and other Islamic states in the Malay world needed at that time. Melaka was under constant threat from the Siamese. Cheng Ho's stay in the kerajaan from 1408 planted the foundation for the transformation of Melaka from an insignificant settlement to the most powerful state in the Malay world. Ma Huan (1380–1460), Cheng Ho's interpreter, wrote about this event colorfully:

> In the seventh year of the Yung-lo [period], [the cyclic year] *chi-ch'ou*, the Emperor ordered the principal envoy of the grand eunuch Cheng Ho and others to assume command [of the treasure ships], and to take the imperial edicts and to bestow this chief two silver seals, a hat, a girdle and a robe. [Cheng Ho] set up a stone tablet and raised [the place] to a city; [and] it was subsequently called the "country of Man-la-chia [Melaka]." Thereafter Hsien lo [Siam] did not dare to invade it.[61]

Cheng Ho went further to demand that Siamese cease any future interference in Melaka's affairs and send gifts to China as a form of apology for its previous treatment of the Malay state. It was partly due to Cheng Ho's firm stance toward the Siamese that Melaka grew into a center for the propagation of Islam without any interruptions until Cheng Ho's departure in 1431. Melaka's first three rajas' diplomatic visits to Emperor Yung-lo's court in China sealed Chinese protection for the kerajaan. These rajas traveled with Cheng Ho's fleets to and from China.[62] Cheng Ho's Islamization efforts in Melaka were also applied in the Brunei kerajaan. He sent part of his fleet to Brunei to restore order in the polity and to end the tributes that Brunei had to present to Javanese rulers. Through Cheng Ho's agency, the main sea routes linking Brunei and other Malay states were kept safe, thereby allowing the smooth importation of natural products such as camphor and pepper from Brunei and other parts of Malaysia to China. Islam in Malaysia grew with such maritime trade with the Chinese.[63]

Cheng Ho died in April 1433 during his last voyage to India, but his exploits lived on, apprising us of the agency of the Chinese in Islamizing Malaysia. They came from afar to aid the rajas and to build institutions as well as places of worship. The Chinese worked hand in hand with other Muslims to build flourishing ports in Malaysia. Although Cheng Ho came to the Malay world with formidable

fleets unmatched by any in his time, his main mission was not to colonize. Rather, he was working in the service of a non-Muslim polity which, for all intents and purposes, appointed him to establish links and made it known that China was the great power of the day to be respected and befriended through trade and diplomacy. In an age defined by overlapping tributary systems, China sought to be at the very top of the chain. Cheng Ho, in turn, was at the very top of China's chain of illustrious Muslim emissaries.[64]

In fulfilling his duties, Cheng Ho made it apparent to his benefactors that part of his mission was to infuse Islam. They did not prevent him from doing so. In fact, the Chinese emperor ensured that he received all he needed to carry the message of Islam across the oceans and seas. We may surmise that the Ming rulers of China had, in fact, served as patrons of Islam in Malaysia and Southeast Asia in general by sending their best sons to the region. In return, Cheng Ho furthered Chinese prominence and entrenched his deeds in the hearts of Malay Muslims in a way that was so far-reaching that it is impossible to write the history of Malaysia without mentioning his name. Indeed, together with queens and scholars, the Chinese and other foreigners, Muslims as well as non-Muslims were all entwined in furthering the populist phase of Islamization in Malaysia.

Whither the Populist Phase of Islamization

With the exception of Melaka, which was in Portuguese hands after 1511 and subsequently the Dutch from 1645 until 1825, most Malay states remained largely in the grip of the local rajas or as tributaries of other regional powers until the nineteenth century. Islam continued to spread, and various scholarly and missionary networks and institutions mushroomed in port cities as well as in rural parts of Malaysia. So strong was the influence of Islam that Christianity barely made any inroad in the Malay Peninsula despite its success in eastern Indonesia and the Philippines.[65] Christian missionaries ramped up efforts among indigenous communities in Borneo and other parts of the Indonesian islands, but, even then, progress was slow because these communities probably saw little to be gained out of the new religion until the onset of formal colonialism. That Melaka was still in non-Muslim hands gave added impetus for Muslims to spread their religion more aggressively.[66] And yet such efforts were somewhat stifled by internal struggles between Muslims, which soon paved the way for colonialism or, as I will show, colonial Islamization.

One example of such internal struggles can be seen in the case of the Johor kerajaan. Founded in 1528 by Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah II, after the fall of

Melaka, Johor grew to be among the most powerful sultanates in the Malay world, with a territorial influence that covered much of the south and east coast of the Malay Peninsula and also the islands of Siak, Bengkalis, Kampar, Bunguran, Bintan, Bulang, and Bunguran in Sumatra. The kingdom launched many raids against the Portuguese in Melaka and repulsed attacks from a rival Muslim kingdom, Aceh. Upon the weakening of Acehnese power in the 1630s, the Johor Sultanate became a trading hub and a staunch promoter of Islam. Alliances with other Malay kingdoms such as Brunei and Perak as well as other polities in Java and the Moluccas enhanced Johor's image as a proponent of Islamization.[67]

Johor's contribution to Islamization was facilitated by the relationships the kerajaan established with non-Muslims. It entered into treaties and alliances with the Dutch during the conquest of Melaka in 1641. In return, the Dutch furthered the Johor kerajaan's political and commercial interests by offering easy and safe access to Johor traders across the straits of Melaka and maintaining a non-interventionist policy toward Johor's expansionism. With Dutch neutrality and sometimes military support, Johor rivaled Muslim kingdoms. One may ask why did a Muslim kingdom became bedfellows with a non-Muslim force? The plausible answer is that the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries were a period of competition for dominance—sometimes involving bloodshed and violence—among different Muslim kingdoms in the Malay world. Because of this, calls for holy war against unbelievers were at times mediated or totally shelved in view of realpolitik. For some kerajaans, the enemy of their enemy was their friend.[68]

For the same reason, the Johor kerajaan enlisted the support of another group of non-Muslims: the Orang Laut. These were a seafaring community that consisted of three main tribes: the Moken/Moklen, Sama-Bajau, and the Orang Laut. They lived on the coasts, estuaries, and islands along the Straits of Melaka, Sumatra, and Riau-Lingga archipelagoes and as far away as Burma and Thailand. Their knowledge of trade lanes, access to valuable sea products, and fierce fighting abilities made them sought-after mercenaries for the kerajaans. Johor continued the Melakan tradition of enlisting the services of the Orang Laut to bolster its position in an atmosphere of competing hegemonies. Through Orang Laut's raids of enemy ships and regulation of the sea lanes, Johor maintained its dominance in much of the seventeenth century.[69] By virtue of their interactions and intermarriage with Muslims in Johor and other Malay states, many of the Orang Laut eventually embraced Islam, bringing about the division between *Orang Laut Kappir* (Orang Laut Who Were Disbelievers) and *Orang Laut Islam* (Orang Laut Who Were Muslims).[70]

Yet such alliances and strategies for survival could not sustain the supremacy of the kerajaan nor arrest its decline in the second decade of the eighteenth century. As Leonard Andaya explains, the

> wars among the Malays, the Buginese, and the Minangkabaus for the right to rule the enfeebled Kingdom of Johor encouraged directed and undirected piracies which disrupted trade passing through the Strait of Melaka. No single Malay kingdom arose in these years to claim the mantle formerly assumed by Srivijaya, Melaka, Aceh, and Johor in preserving the peace in the Straits.[71]

The Perak kerajaan under Sultan Iskandar Syah of Perak (1752–1765) and Sultan Mahmud (1765–1773) did attain some degree of prosperity as these rulers followed the policies of the Johor rulers of forging close bonds with the *orang kaya* (rich merchants) to boost trade and to keep alliances with nearby kingdoms strong.[72]

Still, the decline or the failure to keep up with the changing winds of modernity was evident in almost all the Malay-Islamic states. This waning of political, military, economic, and moral authority and pre-eminence mirrored the Muslim world as a whole. Toward the closing of the eighteenth century, the great Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires had either disintegrated or experienced decay and stagnancy in their ranks. This was the "dark age" of Islamic history, during which internal fragmentation and resistance toward reform and renewal made Muslims globally susceptible to colonialism. The Algerian thinker Malek Bennabi termed it the condition of "coloniability," that is, the tendency of Muslims in the modernizing world to be susceptible to colonial rule and subjugation.[73]

At the same time, the European powers were fast outshadowing the Malay kerajaans, particularly in the realm of military technology. By the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch was able to wrestle Melaka from the Portuguese and governed much of its territories from Batavia. The Dutch trading company VOC (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) expanded its capitalist interests through treaties with Malay kerajaans and used military occupation when local rajas and chiefs refused to submit to the colonizers' demands. Java became the VOC main base, and, from there, the Dutch encroached on the sovereignty of kingdoms of what was later known as the Dutch East Indies or Indonesia. The British East India Company (EIC) initially had little interest in trade across the Malay states and directed its focus on India. But it soon entered into the scramble for colonies upon the worsening of British rivalry with the French and upon seeing Dutch success in its control of commercial activities in the Malay

world. By the late eighteenth century, the British had formally entered into the league of colonizers, setting up their first port in Penang in 1786. Rented for an annual sum of 10,000 pounds from the Sultan of Kedah in exchange for British protection against the Siamese, the terms of agreement were soon breached. The British took over the island, including Province Wellesley, as part of the larger project of dominating trade in the region. The commodities that the British were after at that time were tea, rubber, and tin, produced and shipped through the Straits of Melaka.[74] With British colonialism came a new phase of Islamization in Malaysia—the reformist Islamization. As the British sought to reform Islam in Malaysia in ways that would be aligned to their colonizing schemes, Muslims organized themselves to reform Islam to become a liberating force and source of ethical guidance in the face of modernity.

PART III

Reformist Islamization

5

Islam and Colonialism

THE COLONIZATION OF Malaysia progressed rapidly from the time the British set up its first port in 1786. Colonial port towns were established in Penang and Melaka. In 1819, Singapore was included in the list of colonies through the cunning of Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781–1826) and John Crawfurd (1783–1868). A treaty recognizing the right of Sultan Hussein to kingship soon turned into the British formally taking over the island, while the raja was held for ransom because of the debts he had accumulated since appointed as the premier of Singapore.[1] The Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 effectively left the Malay Peninsula and Borneo in British hands. Two years later, Singapore, Melaka, and Penang were placed under a single administrative unit known as the "Straits Settlements." Aside from serving as trade centers, the Straits Settlements were springboards for the British to slowly infiltrate other Malay states already in stasis due to internal rivalries, poor leadership, and relentless battles with regional powers. Among the Malay states in the midst of the waning moments of the kerajaans was Perlis. It was founded in 1843 after the Sultan of Kedah, Ahmad Tajuddin II, gave part of his kingdom to an Hadrami Arab family, the Jamalullail, for their staunch support of the kerajaan in confronting Siamese invasions of Kedah since 1821. Helmed by Raja Syed Hussein (1805–1873), the Perlis kerajaan was already drained by years of uprisings against the Siamese. Annual tributes paid to the Siamese to avoid imminent invasions meant that there was little revenue to build a strong kingdom. Like all other northern Malay states, Perlis was thus caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. Perlis rulers detested Siamese rule, but they were by no means aware that the British was a rising power in Malaysia, establishing its bases and unapologetically encroaching on all Malay states.[2]

From the 1870s, the British had placed under its dominion the western Malay states of Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang, all of which were plagued with anarchy and strife that provided the pretext for colonial rule.[3] These states were termed "Federated Malay States," guided by British residents

and a resident-general whose advice was binding except in matters of customs and, sometimes, issues pertaining to Islam. Johor accepted British residentship in 1895, and Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, and Terengganu followed suit after the Treaty of Bangkok in 1909. These states were known as the "Unfederated Malay States." Patani remained under Siamese rule. All of these states were included under the larger entity, "British Malaya." Meanwhile, in Borneo, the Brunei kerajaan ceded Sarawak to the English Brooke family in 1841. In 1888, the British formally placed the whole of North Borneo, which included Brunei, Labuan, Sabah, and Sarawak, under its rule. All of these states remained under British rule, except for three years of Japanese rule from 1942 to 1945, though the many structures and institutions that the British created to manage Islam and Muslims in Malaysia barely changed until Malaysian independence in 1957.[4]

Such is a rough sketch of British colonialism in Malaysia. It is not my intention to recount in detail a story that has already been covered in many authoritative accounts. My objective here is to outline the impact that British colonialism had on Islamization in Malaysia from the nineteenth century up to the 1950s. Although the historiography that has come down to us gives the overall impression that the British were passive in matters pertaining to Islam and left much of such work to Muslim themselves, the reality was somewhat more complex.[5] The British did intervene in Islamic affairs—a process I call "colonial Islamization," which consisted of a range of tactics, laws, establishments, compulsion, and negotiations—in an endeavor to reform and refashion Islam in their image and to their advantage. The experience of Muslim revolts and Islam-inspired rebellions in India informed the British that Islam among the Malays or any community whatsoever should not be left unmanaged.[6]

As early as the 1820s, Thomas Stamford Raffles warned the Governor General of India that the continuing and growing religious influence of Islam in the Malay world via the work of Hadrami Arab missionaries could drastically change the Malay attitude toward the Europeans. Left to the views and devices of the Hadrami Arabs, Malays would grow to become religious fanatics and bigots "incapable of receiving any species of useful knowledge."[7] Raffles was, of course, too hyperbolic in his account of Malay-Islam and the Hadrami Arab threat, but a grain of truth can be found. Hadrami Arabs stepped up their proselytizing work in Malaysia in the face of the European takeover of states formerly ruled by Muslim rajas. A sizable number of these Hadrami Arabs in Sumatra and Java were on the frontlines of holy battles against the Europeans.[8] Realizing the powerful potential of Islam and anticipating uprisings like those they had to quell in other parts of the empire where Muslims detested foreign intervention, between 1786 and 1957 the British treaded carefully but assuredly. In 1867, James R. Logan (1819–1869), an influential orientalist and landowner in Province Wellesley, cautioned the colonial

government that any attempt to meddle in matters pertaining to Islam could "excite suspicion and arouse bigotry."[9]

Muslim uprisings were bound to happen, as evidenced in the Naning War of the 1830s, the Pahang Rebellion of 1888, the To' Janggut Uprising of 1915, the Sepoy Mutiny in 1915, the Terengganu Revolt of 1928, and the Maria Hertogh Riots in 1950 (see Chapter 6). In the intervening time, some colonial officials did acknowledge the usefulness of Islam for colonialism. Speaking to colonial officers under his charge, George Maxwell (1871–1959) stated in 1922: "There is a reason to fear that the Malays will deteriorate morally if their religion fails to maintain its hold upon them."[10] Moral failure, to Maxwell, would lead to laxness and lack of will to succeed and hence lead to adverse effects on the colonial economy. Still, for most British administrators and scholars, Islam was but a veneer on the minds and hearts of the Malays that therefore provided a strong explanation for Malay indolence. From that assumption, they held that Islam in Malaysia could be easily secularized and a duality in systems, thought, and practices could be introduced to make Muslims more receptive to British rule. This ideological project eventually found expression in the laws, institutions, and enforcement measures in colonial Malaysia, a development that forms a crucial part of colonial Islamization, where Islam continued to spread but with colonial characteristics and with the colonial state structuring Islam to serve its ends.[11]

Colonial Islamization was a complex process that engulfed much of Malaysia in phases and in varying degrees. The Straits Settlements were exposed to colonial Islamization much earlier and more intensively, followed by the Federated Malay States and then the Unfederated Malay States, which were the least affected until the post–World War Two period. In the Federated Malay States, a centralized civil service was instituted by the British in the 1870s, depriving the Malay elites of their traditional bureaucratic functions. In the Unfederated Malay States, however, a separate civil service was created, giving more room for the traditional leaders to exercise some influence. Despite these varying forms of intervention, by 1920 colonialism in Malaysia had entered into its most active phase, affecting both urban and rural areas.[12] Even though the British did not annex Malaysia like other colonial powers in the Malay world did, colonial officers and their native collaborators ran the most important sectors of Malaysian life and standardized much of the operations on the ground, from policing and the administration of justice, roads, railways, medical services, education, agriculture, postal services, mining, sanitation, and currency, among many others. Islam did not escape the bureaucratizing edge of the colonial state, or as Talal Asad explains in his study of the emergence of the modern state in Muslim lands, "all aspects of individual life—even the most intimate, such as birth and death—no one, whether religious or other can avoid encountering its ambitious powers."[13]

In the following pages I focus more on the forest without forgetting the trees, the macro trends without totally downplaying the micro, to help convey a broad sense of how the British colonized Islam and how a reformed version of Islam shaped their policies as well. I show that undergirding colonial Islamization were a few entwined procedures: collaboration, bureaucratization, and fragmentation. The British invested in these procedures to extend their tentacles into the deepest reaches of Muslim societies and to obtain their consent and compliance. More crucially, though the British sought to steer Islam in the course they desired, the responses and outcomes were not always what they had anticipated.

Collaboration

Collaboration formed the essential pillar of British colonialism in Malaysia and its management of Islam. An economical and safe way to secure their hold on the colonies, collaboration provided the British with a buffer between them and the colonized, especially in times of crisis. The British were maestros in the art of collaborating with Muslims. Their overall aim was to propound that they were "gentlemanly imperialists" governing colonies indirectly, giving a fair share of power to local Muslim elites. This gentlemanly approach, however, flies in the face of many instances of direct intervention as and when the administrators both in London and in the colonies felt that British interests were at stake. Muslim violent resistance, civil strife, and the impatience and bravado of colonial officers on the spot tended to be the most convenient justifications for colonial infringement in local affairs.[14]

The British collaborated with a few notable groups of Muslims and used them as levers to steer Islamization in the direction of colonialism. No different from the cases of India and Africa, these collaborators, according to Ronald Robinson,

> were of many kinds: some were active, but most were passive, some were modern, but more were traditional elites; some collaborated at central, others at provincial or local levels; some cooperated commercially, other administratively, ecclesiastically, or educationally. The secret of a successful system, from the European standpoint, lay in this variety of choice and combination. It is often said this was a policy of divide and rule. More truly, rule was possible because its subjects were socially divided and could not unite. The European official bargained with traditional collaborators the more easily because their interests lay in regional politics and traditional activities, whereas he was concerned mainly with central politics and modern activities.[15]

Foremost were the rulers and chiefs. British residents obtained the backing and guidance from the rajas and their lieutenants, who were regarded by the Malay masses as custodians and protectors of the Muslim faith. The Pangkor Treaty of 1874 clearly demarcated the roles of the Malay rajas vis-à-vis the colonial state in that the rajas or sultans must "receive and provide a suitable residence for a British Officer to be called Resident, who shall be accredited to his Court and whose advice must be asked and acted upon on all matters other than those touching upon Malay Religion and Custom."[16] Muslim elites were given pensions and recognition at the cost of being reduced to holding symbolic roles and inconsequential positions. Power among the Muslim elites existed only at the village level held by the *penghulus* (village leaders), whom the British saw as useful in expanding their reach into the rural parts of Malaysia.[17] The rajas, their subordinates, and the British residents worked together and engaged in frequent dialogues in deciding what ought to be done to gain the support of the Muslims for the kerajaans bound through treaties with the colonial rulers. Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, who was appointed as Governor and High Commissioner to Malaya from 1887 till 1893, underlined this point by stating that the Malay rajas as well as the chiefs were not mere artefacts of the old order but a vital cushion between British and the masses.[18] Cecil did not include Muslims in his assessment because the point was already a cliché by then. The Malays would generally abide by these elites' suggestions and policies pertaining to Islam.

The power equation was essentially lopsided, with the British getting more out of rajas to get the most out of the resources Malaysia could offer. The rajas were largely consigned to overseeing religious and cultural affairs and state and other ceremonies, which they enjoyed being part of.[19] This arrangement was particularly important after the assassination of a British resident, James W. Birch, in Perak in 1875. British rule became effectively more muscular and assertive to the point that they influenced the selection of rajas and chiefs in the Federated Malay States who were compliant with colonial schemes. An incompetent Malay ruler or chief with a hands-off approach on matters pertaining to Islam and Muslims was much preferred to a well-educated and astute one. In every state, the British established state councils where the rajas, Malays chiefs, and non-Malay representatives were consulted on issues relating to governance, including Islam. *Durbars*, or meetings with Malay rajas and British officials, were institutionalized. These councils provided "the fiction of native self-rule by the Malay sultans(See Figure 5.1)."[20] As was so often the case, British residents would pass laws without prior consultation with state councils. Rulers were strongly advised to abide by British notions of what was best for Muslims in the colonies. One clear example of this was the Mohammedan Marriage and Divorce Registration Act in 1910. State councils were, for the large part, mere rubber stamps for the

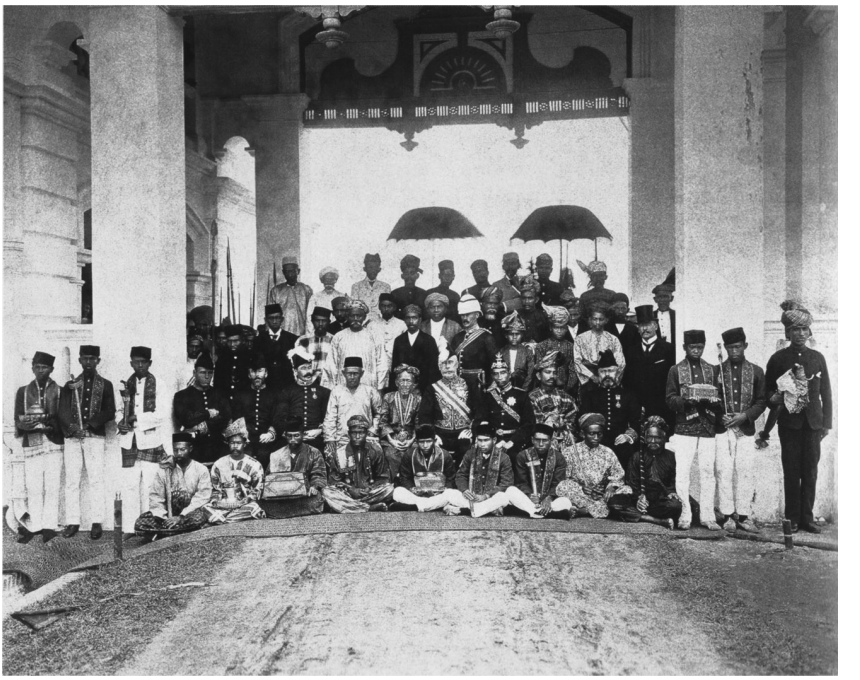


FIGURE 5.1 Sultans at First Malayan Durbar

colonial government's desire to police and govern Malay Muslims' life, values, and morality.[21]

Through the rajas, the British restricted the powers of the *muftis*, *ulama* (religious scholars), and *qadis* (sometimes referred to as *kathis* which meant judges). A host of councils and committees under the purview of rajas were created in every Malay state, such as *Majlis Ugama Islam dan Isti'adat Melayu* (Council of Islam and Malay Customs), Shari'ah Committees, and Qadis Committees, among others. By 1948 these councils had morphed into religious affairs departments tasked to issue edicts in line with the colonial government policies. There were some exceptions to the rule, such as the appointment of Syaikh Tahir Jalaluddin (1869–1956) for a brief time as religious judge in Johor in 1911. Reformist-minded and strong-headed, he was vocal in his refusal to subject Islam to colonial pressures.[22] As a matter of principle, any mufti, alim (singular for "ulama"), or qadi who refused to comply with colonial policies would be disciplined or dismissed. Unlike in the precolonial period, the roles of these religious elites were limited to matters of marriage and divorce; determining the dates of holy months and religious festivals; answering mundane questions about customs, rituals, and beliefs; endorsing the legitimacy of rajas selected by the British; and,

more crucially, keeping anti-colonialist elements in society in check through the issuing of religious opinions and propaganda writings.

To keep the rajas' long-held status as patrons of Islam alive in the minds of the Muslims, the British encouraged the building of grand mosques. Some of these mosques, estimated to cost more than 300,000 pounds, were lavish and extravagant enough to put the Majlis Ugama of Kelantan in debt.[23] Much like their love for grand weddings and extravagant coronation rites, the rajas were particularly fond of building grand mosques, naming these religious buildings after their forefathers or themselves and appointing meek religious elites as administrators. Through these mosques, the rajas maintained their connection with the masses while fulfilling their personal responsibility toward all things Islamic apart from showing their outright allegiance to the British. No example shows this more clearly than the Jubilee Mosque in Perak, a magnificent piece of architecture built in 1897, endorsed by the raja, and named in conjunction with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.[24]

At first, British collaboration with the rajas, muftis, ulama, and qadis cultivated the crucial ideological backing that the colonial state needed in times of peace and crisis. Muslim elites rallied in support of the British empire during the First World War even though they were aware that the Ottomans had sided with the Axis powers. In the early stages of the Second World War, Muslim elites read prayers in mosques and schools across many Malay states, beseeching God for the eventual triumph of the British Empire.[25] In the long run, however, Muslim elites lost much of the respect and reverence of the Muslim masses, who eventually took matters in their own hands by launching rebellions and other forms of resistance against colonial rule and their collaborators.[26]

The management of Islam in the Straits Settlements was perhaps less complex for the British than the other Malay states because of the absence of rajas and traditional chiefs. Colonial administrators collaborated with Muslim merchants and religious leaders. These Muslims mostly hailed from Hadrami Arab, Persian, and Indian backgrounds. They were cooperative toward the colonial rulers in light of the many material provisions and prestigious positions that the British bestowed on them in the colonies. From parcels of land, to access to ports, to lofty titles such as "Justice of Peace" and other honors that came with decorative medals presented on behalf of or even by the Queen herself, the British incorporated these Muslim elites into "the collective hierarchy of the empire."[27]

For much of the nineteenth century, Muslim elites in the Straits Settlements established mosques, madrasahs, orphanages, and halfway houses for the needy and managed the hajj yearly independently under the close surveillance of British intelligence. After the Indian mutiny in Singapore that broke out on

February 15, 1915, the British formalized what was once a loose group of Muslim elites into "Muslim Advisory Boards." The boards advised the colonial government on Muslim matters but were seen by the Malays as poorly representing the needs of the native population due to the dominance of Arabs and Indians. Criticisms of the boards did not stifle their continued existence until the 1950s. The boards were instrumental in calming Muslims during the heat of the Maria Hertogh riots in Singapore, a violent event which broke out on December 11, 1950 caused by a legal tussle regarding a Dutch girl who was raised by a Muslim family but was ordered by the British court to be returned to her Dutch parents. The Muslim Advisory Board worked with British governors to assuage Muslim rage in that highly charged atmosphere.[28]

In sum, Muslim elite collaborators in Malaysia performed "inter-hierarchical roles," an in-between position that made them vulnerable to pressures from the colonial powers and societies on the ground.[29] Their ability to balance these conflicting demands depended largely on the resources at their disposal and the legitimacy that they had accumulated through the years. In the case of the Hadrami Arabs in the Straits Settlements, they had been generally successful in walking a fine line. As recognized leaders and advocates of Muslim causes, most Hadrami Arabs, particularly the Sayyids, won the trust of the colonial authorities through strategic partnership while maintaining their own economic, educational, and religious interests.[30]

One other group of collaborators that the British used for the purposes of colonial Islamization were writers and intellectuals. Two towering and yet controversial figures in that regard were Abdullah Munshi (1796–1854) and Muhammad Eunos Abdullah (1876–1933). Born in Kampung Pali, Melaka, to migrant parents of Hadrami and Tamil ancestry, Abdullah mastered Tamil, Arabic, Hindi, Malay, English, and one of the Chinese dialects at an early age. His extraordinary intelligence soon came to the attention of the British, who appointed him as copier of documents before appointing him as tutor, secretary, and interpreter to Thomas Stamford Raffles. Abdullah also taught Malay to Indian soldiers as well as American and British missionaries, earning himself the honorable title of *munshi* (teacher or educator with mastery in several languages) in the process. His most lasting contributions to colonial Islamization were his translation of the Bible into Malay and the publication of an autobiography, the *Hikayat Abdullah* (Story of Abdullah, 1849), and travelogue, *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah ke Kelantan* (Abdullah's Voyage to Kelantan, 1838). These texts were prescribed by the British as essential readings in Malay schools. They provided lucid details of the many problems faced by Malay societies. Abdullah was especially critical of the Malay royal family, which, to him, was riven by power struggles and decadent behavior. The backwardness of the elites mirrored the

state of the common people. They had internalized customs and traditions that impeded social progress. Abdullah felt that the British could serve as a civilizing influence for the Malays. Evidence of this could be found in the British orderly management of the colonies, in contrast to the Malay states that were still under the rule of the kerajaans.[31]

Abdullah's trenchant critiques of the Malays and overt praise for British rule were shared by Eunos Abdullah. Born in Singapore, Eunos attended a Malay school and subsequently graduated from the Raffles Institution before being employed as a harbormaster. In his early thirties he took on a new job as the first editor of the Malay newspaper, the *Utusan Melayu* (Malay Messenger), which was funded by the British-owned *Singapore Free Press*. Eunos founded another newspaper, *Lembaga Melayu* (Malay Foundation), seven years after joining *Utusan Melayu*. At the same time, he was a member of the Muslim Advisory Board and served as justice of peace, municipal commissioner, and legislative councilor in addition to being the first Malay member of the Singapore Rotary Club and the founder of the first Malay political movement, the *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* (Singapore Malay Union). He was a dedicated promoter of Malay progress in education and championed their special rights. Eunos was unswervingly loyal to the colonial state and believed that progress for the Malays and Muslims in general could be achieved under colonial rule. An obituary on the occasion of his death in 1933 in the *Straits Times* newspaper stated: "It was his greatest wish to see the Malays develop into loyal citizens of the Empire, and he did much in the furtherance of this ideal."[32]

Eunos used his various affiliations and activism to promote the idea that Malay Muslims could be loyal servants of the colonial state and that there was no contradiction between faith and non-Muslim rule. His close interactions with the British impressed upon him the achievements of certain peoples in world history, especially the Europeans. Using his journalistic pen as an ideological tool, he introduced the concept of the Malay *bangsa* (race) into the local Malay vocabulary. The long-term effects of the introduction of the idea of bangsa among the Malays was more momentous that Eunos might have imagined. What he had done was to transform the once fluid understanding of Malayness to one that was more rigid and defined in terms of physical, cultural, and geographical characteristics. Eunos's conception of Malayness set in motion a brand of racial nationalism that determined how Malays viewed other groups in society. Without realizing the full import of his writings, Eunos had purveyed colonial racial discourses and grafted these ideas into the heart of what was previously an inclusive and cosmopolitan Malay Muslim society. The potent amalgamation of bangsa and Islam would soon characterize racial politics in Malaysia in the post-independence period.[33]

The British benefited greatly from ordinary Muslims policing the community and their faith. In his classic study of colonial India, Christopher Bayly uncovered British use of a network of spies and informants to maintain their grip on the colony.[34] The British in Malaya depended on similar forms of surveillance techniques to keep track of what was happening in the Muslim community. Spies and informants facilitated in identifying possible threats coming from Muslim radicals and hajj pilgrims, tracking their activities and discussions especially after the Young Turk Revolution (1908–1908).[35]

Informants and spies also proved crucial in the British war against communism during the Malayan Emergency as the colonial state used vital information to proscribe militant cells and churn out propaganda to win over the Muslim community. Concerned about the rising Muslim sentiments against colonialism in the age of decolonization in the 1940s, British intelligence concluded that militant Islam in Malaya "would not go beyond seditious public speaking and boycotts."[36]

Like elsewhere in the British empire, informants and spies were not always reliable, as they manipulated reports for their own ends and used fabrications to turn the tables against the paymasters. During the war in Naning, Melaka (1831–1832), a colonial officer, Braddell, noted that:

> The feeling in favor of the Pengulu as a saint, warring for the faith against infidels, was so strong that nothing could induce the *rakyats* (subjects) to assist the British in any respect against him, and it was found that the spies employed were universally false, conveying perfect intelligence to the Malays of all the movements of the Europeans, and at the same time keeping the latter in the dark as to their opponents.[37]

Double-crossers and falsifiers abound in the ranks of native intelligence. Important information was sometimes suppressed, at other times embellished, and on many occasions designed to mislead.[38] But the British needed these collaborators to give them a sense of what was happening—even if partial and skewed—as they provided the necessary structure for what needed to be done to make Islam more manageable to the colonial state. Beyond problems of betrayal and deceit, Muslim informants and spies provided the British with the knowledge base that informed the policies and schemes used in the management of Muslims, in times of both peace and conflict.

Bureaucratization

Collaboration with the British was regulated through a powerful bureaucracy. The British Empire was in no uncertain terms a bureaucratic empire that flowed

from London to the colonies. Wherever Britain laid its imperialist feet, colonial administrators would establish administrative systems in order to fortify their authority and allow a smooth exchange and dissemination of information and directives from the metropole to the colonies. The British bureaucratized many aspects of native life to implant new forms of knowledge—in fact, their own ideas of how the colonized should think and conceptualize realities.[39] The effect of this was the creation of a host of ministries, departments, and councils that overshadowed the functions of local institutions. Islam in Malaysia experienced this bureaucratizing process in a far-reaching way.

Earlier, mention was made about the state and religious councils the British had established. Members of these councils aided in the colonial bureaucratization of two other areas of Muslim life: laws and education. Of the two, laws preoccupied British attention because they encountered native laws that addressed all aspects of life from the profane to religious domains, fusing elements of adat and the shari'a. The effective British strategy for diminishing such all-encompassing laws was to limit these laws to deal only with marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Civil and criminal laws came under British jurisdiction. Moreover, in the event that the shari'a came in conflict with colonial laws, the latter would take precedence. Thus began the secularization of laws in the Malay states that was realized through bureaucratization. David Banks describes this as "a separation between secular and religious streams in Malay culture: between a secular Malay man and a Malay Muslim."[40] Through their legal bureaucracies, the British limited the influence of Islam and adat in the realm of laws in Malaysia.

The limits placed on Islamic and adat laws could be traced back to November 26, 1826 when a charter was passed in the Straits Settlements that English law, also known as the common law, would be applied in British colonies and that all crimes and cases were to be handled by the colonial administration.[41] Native legal enforcement bodies were deemed irrelevant from that day on. New laws in line with those in England and British India were drafted. A whole array of courts—high courts, supreme courts, district courts, courts of the Sultan in Council, courts of appeal, senior courts, junior courts, courts of revision, courts of magistrates, shari'a courts, courts of qadis, courts of *penghulus* (village chiefs)—were established. A dual court structure emerged out of this legal transformation—civil and Muslim courts. Adat or customary laws were included as part of Muslim laws. This duality caused many problems in later years, as there were not enough competent lawyers to deal with cases when there arose a conflict between British and Islamic laws.[42]

The bureaucratization of colonial legal procedures was not a linear process. Sensitive to the possibility of Malay uprisings in some states in the event of any outsider interference into age-old customs and traditional laws, the British

took a gradual approach to reform in the hope that education and modernity would slowly change local mindsets and practices. Slavery, a practice condoned in Southeast Asia, was outlawed in all Malay states in 1928 after a century of negotiations and clashes with Malay chiefs. Sarawak was the last state to end of all forms of human bondage.[43] In Negri Sembilan, customary laws reigned supreme for many generations, especially in inheritance law. Matrilineality rather than the usual patrilineal system of inheritance was the dominant practice in the Malay states.[44] Like Negri Sembilan, all other Unfederated Malay States had English laws implemented in more wide-ranging way only after the Second World War when all Malaysian laws were consolidated under one standardized juridical system. The Federated Malay States went through a different trajectory. English laws and courts were formalized within three decades after the Pangkor Treaty. Other than Negri Sembilan, the British imposed English property laws in all colonies because these laws were deemed to be more just. The British were also aware that unregulated, Muslim-owned properties and endowments would lead to the creation of more wealth for the Malays. For this reason, British courts limited the development of new Malay Muslim endowments to minimize intergenerational accumulation of capital which, we shall see below, had implications for other areas of Muslim life.[45]

Still, the dominance of colonial states in the realm of laws as in other aspects of native life, as Ranajit Guha has explained, did not entail total hegemony.[46] The British faced many problems with qadis and other religious officers on their payroll. Many qadis would marry men to women they wished to keep as secret wives even after bills on "Mahomedan Marriage" were passed in the 1870s to regulate such unofficial polygamous arrangements. Until the 1940s, many marriages in rural districts within the Federated and Unfederated Malay States were either unrecorded or consummated by unofficial qadis. As for inheritance, families of deceased Muslims who left no written wills would often encounter problems dividing fairly left-behind wealth and properties. These yawning gaps in the system were only properly regulated after the passing of the Muslim Ordinance in 1957, when appointments of religious officials were made more stringent.[47]

The British were more scrupulous when it came to bureaucratizing the hajj and were, at the same time, perceptive of Muslim needs and tribulations in fulfilling the devotional rite. For Muslims from Malaysia, the hajj was a costly venture, both materially and mortally. Before the invention of planes, journeys on ships to Makkah stretched from a few weeks to months, draining the lifetime savings of each and every ordinary pilgrim who desired to fulfill one of the important pillars of Islam. Some pilgrims returned home with huge debts. Shipwrecks and sicknesses were common, and many pilgrims were cut short of their religious goals as they succumbed to such calamities en route to Makkah. The hajj was

regarded by Muslims in general as a life-changing voyage that would fulfil their longing to pay homage to the house of God and other sites within which Islam first laid its historic foundations. Many pilgrims yearned for death at the Ka'abah itself. Those who survived the long journey to Makkah and back attained some degree of recognition by the local community. Malay Muslims looked forward to being called "hajjis" and were accorded respect by their communities.[48]

From the standpoint of the British, the hajj carried in its path a global web of dangerous peoples, infectious diseases, and pernicious ideas that could harm the intellectual and physical well-being of the colonized and generally submissive Muslims in Malaysia. The cholera outbreak of 1865 that claimed the lives of thousands of pilgrims heightened British concerns over the conduct of the hajj. Adding to the problem of epidemics was the exploitation of aspiring hajjis in Singapore, which were stopping-over ports for many pilgrims from across the Malay world. Many Muslims who came from poor backgrounds would travel and seek employment in Singapore to accumulate enough money to pay for the next ship to Makkah. Many worked in poor conditions on plantations in islands close to Singapore, and a large number were reported to have been enslaved for several years before they could pay their way to Makkah. While a considerable number of these laborers and slaves eventually reached Makkah, many never made the journey and chose instead to return to their homelands. These midway pilgrims were often given the title *Haji Singapura* (The Singapore Haji).[49]

But the hajj was more than a liability. It filled the coffers of the British Empire.[50] In trying to find a middle ground between profit and humanitarian goals, the British bureaucratized the hajj by regulating companies and brokers. Shipping companies that did not conform to safety and hygiene protocols and were caught engaging in other illegal practices on board of ships were heavily fined or banned. The British came down hard on brokers that exploited Malay Muslims who worked in Singapore and other Malay states before making the trip to Makkah. In 1906, the Pilgrims Brokers Ordinance was enacted to tighten the colonial state's grip on the hajj. All pilgrims traveling from British-controlled ports to Makkah were required to provide proof of sufficient funds and of their land of origin or risk being deported back home. In the 1890s, the British introduced hajj passports that provided proper identification for pilgrims to receive the necessary assistance while in Jeddah and Makkah. British officials in Jeddah addressed extortion and other forms of intimidation suffered by the would-be hajjis. Pilgrims were also restricted to traveling on ships and other modes of transportation intended specifically for the hajj, which were mostly owned by Arab and British merchants.[51]

Hajj in Malaysia actually flourished under colonial rule. The smooth running of the hajj and the curbing of exploitative schemes meant that more Malays could

undertake religious journeys. By 1927, 12,000 Malays made the trip to Makkah. With the appointment of Malay pilgrimage officers from 1924, Abdul Majid Zainuddin being among the first, hajj trips became more coordinated. Various conferences and policy-related meetings were held in Jeddah to find ways to prevent unnecessary loss of lives during hajj.[52] The hajj in colonial Malaysia also received added stimulus from *waqfs* (Muslim endowments). Hadrami Arabs in the Straits Settlements were most prominent, utilizing the wealth that they accumulated through their business networks for the benefit of Muslims at large. Through these endowments and networks in the Hejaz and across the Indian Ocean, the Hadrami Arabs aided poor pilgrims in arranging transport, lodging, and other necessities. Loans and donations given out through these waqfs shielded the pilgrims from hawkish moneylenders. Hadrami Arab involvement in hajj lasted till the advent of air travel.[53]

The British were not keen on allowing the waqfs to grow beyond manageable proportions, however. Seeing the potential of waqfs as sources of Muslim activism and empowerment, the British limited the growth of wealth-generating Muslim endowments in the Federal Malay States through the Waqf Prohibition Act of 1911. Waqfs created prior to that date were periodically audited in the event of mismanagement. Through the Muslim and Hindu Endowments Ordinance in 1905 in Singapore and Penang and, later, the Control of Waqf Act of 1951 in Perak, religious councils were authorized to remove or appoint any trustees. In Malaysia, such laws were only repealed in 1978. Singapore upheld these laws, which meant that no new waqfs could be established after the island state's independence from Malaysia. These laws did not arrest the exponential growth of *keramats* (mausoleums) all over Malaysia from the nineteenth century onward. *Keramats* were graves of revered Muslim saints, warriors, and rajas. These were sites of memory for Muslims in remembrance of the accomplishments and contributions of their ancestors, who were, by a twist of irony, anti-colonial. The British permitted the formation of these keramats that, to them, were generally benign. These graves and tombs were emotional valves for the colonized to feel good about a once-glorious, sometimes rebellious, past.[54]

Muslim morality and everyday piety were not left untouched by the bureaucratic weight of the colonial state. Under kerajaan rule, apostasy, incest, adultery, consumption of liquor, and failure to attend Friday prayers and observe fasting were deemed as punishable offenses under the shari'a. Like the *suttee* (widow-burning) in India, the British in Malaysia saw Islamic penalties as problematic. Fining, jailing, and sentencing Muslims to death for contravening shari'a laws ran in conflict with the colonial ideas of what constituted deviance and crime. Compromises were, however, made. The British passed several bills and acts

such as the Religious Observance Act (1911) and the Mohammedan Offense Bill (1938) to allow aspects of the shari'a to be enforced. Those caught eating during the daytime during fasting months, consuming liquor, and engaging in illicit sex were fined. Death sentences for any shari'a-related offenses were lifted.[55] Some British officials were, however, displeased with continuing some aspects of shari'a law in Malaysia. During the height of debates over the Mohammedan Offense Bill, a member of the Selangor legislative council remarked:

> The enforcement of religious observance and certain other matters covered by the Bill are contrary to modern ideas of what is desirable and which are entertained in the west and in other parts of the world. To us many of the provisions of the Bill appear to be reactionary and a return to the state of affairs which existed in Europe a number of centuries ago and which we consider to be happily matters of history only.[56]

In the last analysis, British bureaucratization of Islam ultimately led to the reshaping of religion institutions, rituals, and practices in the Malay states. Islam in Malaysia continued to grow, albeit in colonial terms. Similar to the kerajaan period, Muslims celebrated the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and the *Maulid* (celebration of the birthday of the Prophet) in ostentatious ways and with large processions that lasted for weeks.[57] In the Straits Settlements, Sabah and Sarawak, the end of kerajaans meant that Muslims had to compete more intensely with other religions in infusing their faith. While the British prohibited Christian missionaries from proselytizing Muslims, European missionaries were given much leeway to establish churches and schools as part of the colonial government's desire to civilize the natives. Many non-Muslim tribes in Sabah and Sarawak did convert to Christianity, and the religion progressively gained a foothold in British Borneo[58]

Fragmentation

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.[59]

Written in 1835 by Thomas Babington Macaulay, a politician, polemicist, and historian then based in India, such radical recommendations fashioned British approaches to its colonies. Education was viewed as a means to create a new class of natives that exhibited the virtues of English values and norms. Although Macaulay did not make any mention of religions in the traits of Anglophiles, the implications of his overall proposal incorporated that aspect of the lives of the colonized. Inspired by this, the British in Malaysia introduced educational institutions that would, in the long run, reorient Muslims. But colonial education served a deeper function. It was designed to produce different classes of Muslims that were distinct from one another. Britain was, after all, a class-based society and preferred its colonies to be the same.[60] Education was a medium to fragment Muslims in Malaysia. But how did the British induce Muslims to adopt its version and vision of education in the midst of established religious-based educational institutions that had existed for many centuries?

Initially, the work of nurturing a new class of Muslims was generally left to men on the spot. Stamford Raffles, for example, offered the sons of Sultan Hussein of Singapore the opportunity to be schooled in London. His proposal was politely yet plainly rejected. Undeterred, Raffles then established the famed "Singapore Institution" (later named the "Raffles Institution") in 1823 to attract children of Malay elite families to be educated there. Poor reception and attendance led to the closure of Malay classes merely a decade later. British colonial administrators went on to assist Christian missionaries in the setting up of the Malay schools Telok Blanga and Telok Saga (also known as "Abdullah's School") in Singapore. These schools were open to children of all races, with the aim of providing "a general education and a better standard of moral life based on the tenets of Christianity."[61] Even though Qur'anic lessons were held in these Malay schools, the Bible was taught as part of the curriculum to subtly bring the Muslim children closer to the Christian faith. This invited protests from Muslim parents, who consequently refused to send their children to those schools. A moral panic developed, and the fear of Christianization quickly spread in other Malay states. In Pahang, Muslims avoided British-founded schools altogether, preferring to send their children to religious schools far away from their homes. These parents held that schools established by Christian missionaries were not only injurious to their faith but also offered few prospects for future employment.[62] The same antipathy toward such schools was noticeable in Sabah. This prompted the colonial authorities to establish an entirely new educational institution in 1891, where a respected Islamic teacher and imam, Syaikh Abdul Dalunan, was appointed to attract Muslims to the school. The school failed to get any traction.[63]

Staunch in their belief that education could eventually lead to the creation of a new class of Muslims and guided by major reforms following the Education

Act in 1870, the British created more public schools upon the establishment of residentships in the Federated Malay States. The main aim of these colonial schools was to transmit selected aspects of Malay-Islamic culture and values that cultivated political compliance and empathy. The Resident of Perak, Ernest W. Birch (1857–1929), expressed this point well when he remarked that these schools were meant to impart discipline (i.e., deference to authority) in Malay children: "The greatest aim should be to make the children useful in their homes and callings."[64] No mention was made about schools having to nurture a group of Malay children that could be useful members of their community and religion. Similarly, Frank Swettenham (1850–1946), the first Resident-General of the Federated Malay States, opined that Malays were by nature lazy and "not a knowledge-loving people. Nor do I think too much education is good for them: it leaves them above their natural position and makes them unfit for anything. Too much education is bad for them."[65]

Swettenham's assessment of the Malays provided the framework for the formation of a range of institutions that defined the Malaysian educational landscape until 1957. Viewed in totality, colonial schools served as instruments for social change and as channels to produce educated Malays and upheld the colonial order and the traditional aristocracy. The elite Malay colleges and English-language schools were at the top of the pecking order of colonial schools. Sons of aristocrats and middle-class Malays filled these institutions, and in sending their children there, the Malay elites hoped to a secure bright futures for their progeny in colonial bureaucracies.[66] Among these institutions was the Etonian-type Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, founded in 1905. Christened as the "Malay Residential School" and later renamed the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), the curriculum of this elite school revolved around mastery of the Queen's English, the histories of the British Empire and Europe, in addition to learning the manners and decorum of the upper-class English. Islam was taught as one of the essential subjects, and the focus was on memorizing the articles of faith, essential rituals, and verses of the Qur'an. In fact, the overall tenor of these schools was modeled upon those in England.[67] Little wonder then that graduates were mostly sent to England to pursue their higher studies upon graduation from the MCKK. Most had positions in the civil service ready upon their return to Malaysia. The Malay intellectual Zainal Abidin bin Ahmed (or Za'ba, 1895–1973) characterized these elites as the "westernised Malays"; Anglophile in their attitudes, tastes, and lifestyles and yet Malay in their outer appearance.[68] Had Macaulay traveled to Malaysia in the early twentieth century, he would be pleased to have witnessed his vision come true. Had these Malays actually known their intended place in the greater scheme of things, they would have realized that even as Anglophiles,

they were still regarded by the British and, perhaps by Macaulay as well, as useful but nevertheless inferior.[69]

Another tier of colonial schools kept Malays in their place as peasants and fishermen. Richard J. Wilkinson (1867–1941) and Richard O. Winstedt (1878–1966) were the chief architects of these schools in their effort to admit children from all levels of the Malay society into formal education. To keep the dropout rate low and discourage truancy, these colonial officers introduced a system of fines. Students were taught simple rules of arithmetic, reading, and writing and knowledge of botany and horticulture to prepare them for jobs such as tillers, assistants to surveyors, gardeners, peons, and elementary school teachers. By 1931 there were over a thousand such schools spread across the Malay Peninsula.[70] The study of the Malay language was strongly emphasized in these schools. With the assistance of Malay intellectuals such as Za'ba, romanized letters replaced the Jawi script. Za'ba was inspired by linguistic reforms in Turkey and was convinced that romanizing Malay was a step toward progress for the Malays. He did not, however, foresee the consequences of such a movement. The removal of the Jawi script created a rupture in the Malay-Islamic worldview, from one that was centered on the Islamic heritage that linked the Muslims in Malaysia to wider ummah to a new style of thought that was secular, modern, Western, and local in orientation. With the codification of a once-fluid Malay language came the imposition of new rules of grammar and spelling, as well as terminologies that were of colonial import. Romanization was, in hindsight, a colonization of the Malay language.[71]

Through a reformed Malay language taught in Malay schools, the British trained Malay Muslim students at the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC, established in 1922) to fill the lower rungs of Malayan civil service.[72] Winstedt was also the brainchild behind SITC and envisioned that it would produce batches of Malay graduates that would vindicate colonial rule. Seven hundred teachers were produced, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, a number of these graduates became anti-colonial activists. Suffice it to say, under Ormonde T. Dussek (1886–1965), the principal of SITC from 1922 to 1936, Malay students were exposed to ideas of self-determination and empowerment of their race.[73]

After a number of stalled efforts at introducing reforms, in the early twentieth century the British left Islamic schools to function autonomously. Committees were formed in every Malay state to obtain updates on the progress of Islamic schools but with minimum interference in the curriculum and the appointment of staff. This gave more room for Muslims to govern their own educational institutions, which became staging grounds for anti-colonial movements. To attract Malays into mainstream schools, the colonial government introduced the teaching of the Qur'an, although the subject was often given secondary importance. All in all, by introducing and maintaining a three-tier system of education in

the English, Malay, and Islamic schools, the British had heightened the divisions that existed within the Malay community. Through education, many Muslims became secularized and Westernized. Most had little possible means of upward social mobility, and the "seeds of separatism" among them were sown deep.[74]

Beyond schools, the gaps between Muslims and non-Muslims deepened with the dissemination of racial ideology by the British.[75] Divisions between groups in Malaysia existed under the kerajaans. The rajas acknowledged ethnic differences by allocating spaces for certain nationalities and races as well as assigning specific functions to certain groups. But ideas of ethnicity were far more fluid during the precolonial period. Various groups intermarried and intermingled easily, giving rise to creole communities that bridged the differences between them. Arabs, Indians, and Chinese adopted aspects of Malay cultures and languages to form pidgin words and expressions of their own.[76] The British saw the easy intermingling of groups as an impediment to a more efficient management of the colony. Creoles and creolization meant that communities would develop the potential to coalesce. With the spread of Social Darwinism at the heart of Europe, race was used by the colonial government as an organizing framework to divide and rule policy communities in Malaysia.[77]

The British purveyed racial ideology through newspapers, treatises, school textbooks, censuses, and laws. In the pages of the *Utusan Melayu*, Anglophone Malay writers such as Eunos Abdullah discussed ideas about the Malay race, translated as *bangsa*. This experiment with a new vocabulary to describe the Malays was soon picked by the Malay public, who read these newspapers aloud in coffeeshops, offices, schools, and homes. Bangsa as a frame of reference to discuss the fates of the Malays entered into the editorial pages of other newspapers such as *Majlis* and *Warta Malaya*, in articles reflecting on the future of the colonized race. Even anti-colonial radicals used the term bangsa to make sense of the Malay race, which they felt was suitable for the purposes of mass mobilization. Race was a "derivative discourse" promulgated by the colonializer and appropriated by the colonized.[78]

Ideas of race were spread through school textbooks and censuses. Two influential textbooks were Wilkinson's *A History of the Peninsular Malays, with Chapters on Perak and Selangor* (1923) and Winstedt's *Kitab Tawarikh Melayu* (1918). These books emphasized that Malay bangsa were a mix of different races due to their long interactions with the Indian, Chinese, and other civilizations. In time, a localized form of customs, heritage, language, and religion developed, which was conveniently categorized as Malay.[79] The term "Malay bangsa," as used in these books, was also part of the taxonomy found in the censuses collected by the colonial state. As Charles Hirchman has shown, race was used in the British census in Malaysia as early as 1891. The British census reports began

with more expansive categories that recognized different subethnic groups such as Boyanese, Javanese, and Bugis, among others. As colonialism proceeded to establish itself in all Malay states, census reports moved away from recognizing subethnic differences within communities to subsuming them under the convenient categories of "Malays," "Indians," "Chinese," and "Others." For the British, these racial categories would ease the management of disparate groups and keep every race separate from the others.[80]

The Malay bangsa as a colonial-state sanctioned category received added weight during lengthy debates over the reservation of land spaces for the Malays. In 1913, the Malay Reservations Enactment, No. 15 was passed. Malays deserving land grants were defined as anyone "belonging to any Malayan race who habitually speaks the Malay language or any Malayan language and professes the Muslim religion."[81] This definition and the debates that came with it entrenched the idea of Malays as a racial group to be protected by the laws of the colony, much to the unhappiness of other communities who too felt that they should receive special provisions in acknowledgment for the services they had rendered to the colonial state. Arab, Indian, and Chinese Muslims who were once regarded by kerajaans as part of the larger Malay Muslim community were now excluded. Only the state of Kedah accepted Arab Muslims as Malays eligible for land allocation. The states of Kelantan, Perlis, Johore, and Terengganu accepted the Malay Reservations Enactment definition of Malayness, thus excluding all other Muslim communities. This definition of Malayness was crystallized and used in the Malaysian constitution drawn up on August 27, 1957. Racial ideology hardened a once-fluid Malay identity.[82]

The British operationalized their racial ideology through social engineering. Different communities were made to fill specific sectors of the colonial capitalist economy. Mines and rubber plantations were mostly dominated by migrant merchants and workers, while rice and coffee cultivation, maritime work, cottage industries, maids, drivers, postmen, policemen, and peons were occupations filled mostly by the Peninsula Malays, Javanese, and Sumatrans.[83] In Borneo, the Brooke government implemented ethnic specialization of occupations to keep native and migrant communities apart. The Ibans and other indigenous tribes were permitted to take up policing and military positions, Chinese were allowed to trade and become cash crop farmers, while Malays were assigned administrative positions. Working together with rulers as well as Chinese and European merchants, foreign laborers were brought in large numbers into Malaysia, creating a racialized society of groups kept separate from each other who seldom intermingled. Due to this colonial division of labor, cemented by the creation of racial enclaves, cleavages between different groups were exacerbated.[84]

The rapid entry of foreign labor to Malaysia had other effects. By 1940, the total number of Straits-born and foreign-born Chinese inhabitants in the Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States had superseded the Malays. Although migrants came from Sumatra and Java to settle in many Malay states, their collective numbers as defined by the census as "Malays" (here referring to Malay Muslims) paled in comparison to the "Chinese" and "Indians." Out of a total population of 5,444,833 persons, 2,332,052 were reported to be Chinese and 2,259,331 were Malays. Other foreign communities made up the rest of the population. Malay Muslims were minority populations in the Straits Settlements, Sabah and Sarawak.[85] This demographic imbalance caused much alarm among Malay Muslims. As discussions over their decreasing numbers ran high, Malay Muslims began to question whether other Muslims, namely the Arabs, Indians, and Chinese Muslims, in Singapore ought to also be accepted as part of the colonial-defined Malay community. In a commentary, "Kedah Malay," anxieties over such arguments of accepting foreign Muslims were addressed. The writer, however, accepted race as a valid category:

> Our race has already become an insignificant part of Malaya's population, and with this disruption added, we shall soon sink into oblivion. We ought to be proud to welcome into our midst anybody who professes to be a Malay, with Islam as his religion, and who is prepared to work in the interests of our people wherever he may have originated—be it from other parts of the Archipelago, Arabia, China or India. Look at America: her population is a conglomeration of races. Who are we, then to demur?[86]

If the mass importation of foreign labor and social engineering fragmented communities in Malaysia, the construction of colonial towns and the pronounced divide between rural and urban areas further accentuated intercommunal divisions. Colonial towns all over Malaysia were urban spaces where Europeans were at the apex of the social ladder. Their residences were segregated from the rest of the population so that they rarely mingled with other communities. These colonial towns were organized in ways that mirrored European ideas of race and class. Non-white communities deemed most useful to the colonial administration, namely the Hadrami Arabs, the merchant Chinese, and Malay elites, were allocated sites within the commercial areas of Singapore. Through such spatial organization, the British created the impression that only communities of prestige could live in urban areas populated by Europeans. Islamic institutions grew in these colonial towns, but they were generally oblivious to the sufferings and tribulations of Muslims in rural parts of Malaysia. The rift between "urban" versus "rural" Islam in Malaysia widened during the colonial era.[87]

Indeed, throughout the British Empire, colonial towns received the lion's share of development and facilities while rural areas were generally exploited for natural produce without receiving much many state resources.[88] Muslims who lived in the rural fringes were dominated by poverty as they worked as peasants and agricultural smallholders. Almost 80 percent of the Malay population in the Federated Malay States lived in rural areas, barely making enough to have a decent standard of living under the colonial economy.[89] As more and more lands were lost to foreign private proprietors and increased taxes, Malay Muslims in rural areas developed a strong sense of antagonism, made apparent in the incidence of violent protests.

No less insignificant was the construction of borders that separated the Muslims in Malaysia from the rest of the Malay world. The idea of Malaya introduced by colonial geographers, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists for over a century influenced generations of local scholars, who accepted colonial forms of knowledge.[90] The Malay kerajaan idea of territory and frontiers was among the victims of this epistemological conquest. Through mapping, cartographic representations, the introduction of passports, and the marking out of spheres of influence, the British invented the idea of "British Malaya" as a geopolitical unit with contiguous states, defined not in accordance with local ideas of space but in line with colonial ideas of zones that were under direct colonial rule and those that were ruled through proxies. Like Thailand under colonial influence, the Malaysian geobody became reified.[91] Smooth mobility across the Malay world, which was the rule of the day in the precolonial period, became restricted, and Malay kinship ties that cut across colonial political and administrative borders were constricted.

To conclude, colonialism in Malaysia did not stunt the growth of Islam. Rather, the British reconfigured the Islamic way of life in ways that would make it more amenable to their colonizing intents. From an all-encompassing way of life, Islam under the British became secularized and segmented; its initial scope in dealing with public matters was downplayed to address private issues and concerns. In colonizing Islam, the British, however, unwittingly placed themselves in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the collaboration, bureaucratization, and fragmentation that formed colonial Islamization entrenched the British hold on the Muslims for many decades and gave way to colonial exploitation of the abundant resources that Malaysia offered. On the other hand, in creating new institutions and exposing Muslims to modern ideas as well as new modes of thinking, the British created a new breed of reformed Muslims that would unite and challenge its claim to sovereignty. Notwithstanding its excesses and negative effects, the experience of colonialism was a source of

empowerment for Muslims in Malaysia, a time for them to mobilize and confront the powers that be through force of ideas and arms. Colonial Islamization provided the catalyst for the development of reformist Islamization.[92] Muslim resistance to the immediate ramifications of colonialism is the theme to which we now turn.

6

Repertoires of Muslim Resistance

COLONIAL ISLAMIZATION INVITED a range of responses from Muslims and other communities in Malaysia. Mindful of the reality that colonialism had restructured the norms, cultures, institutions, and laws that had characterized Islam in Malaysia for centuries, Muslims organized themselves to resist, circumvent, and overcome the far-reaching impact of colonialism. In addition to the collaboration discussed in earlier chapters, there developed a variety of responses, or what can be called "repertoires of Muslim resistance." Most vexing to the colonial state was violence. Angered by their disenfranchisement and not wanting to accept the manifold changes taking place around them, Malay Muslims took up arms with the hope that a large-scale rebellion would develop and eventually drive the foreigners from their homeland. Violence barely crippled the British; in fact, it provided more reason for direct intervention in Malaysia as the colonizer sought to protect British economic interests. Still, bouts of failed violence left in their path an enduring reminder to those in power that Muslims were not all passive and compliant and that they would resort to militancy when their rights were infringed and when the foundations of their faith were threatened. For other Muslims, these fruitless violent acts moved them to devise other, more peaceful means to initiate change. These came in the form of intellectual, social, and political movements that aspired to awaken the minds and souls of Muslims to actualizing freedom from colonial rule. Through books, essays, poems, debates, demonstrations, rallies, and protests, Muslims in Malaysia articulated their visions of self-determination and nationalism.

In addition to violence and peaceful protests, Muslims also used passive resistance, or weapons of the weak, as James Scott aptly termed it.[1] From refusing to participate in the colonial economy to refusing to let their children attend British-sponsored educational institutions, this approach freed Muslims, albeit partially, from everyday colonialism. These repertoires of resistance must be viewed

against the context of the Malay saying, "payah-payah dilamun ombak, tercapai juga tanah tepi," pointing to the virtue of persistence and patience in overcoming difficulties and obstacles in life in order for anyone to eventually achieve their aims. Freedom from colonial rule was the end goal of a select group of Muslims in Malaysia. They persevered and struggled to undo the structures of colonialism by any means they deemed necessary and through any mediums available to them. Using their faith as a motivating and mobilizing force, these Muslims infused a renewed understanding of Islam to their countrymen. Colonialism was a blessing in disguise, or as British educationist L. Richmond Wheeler (1888–1948) acknowledged in his book written in the 1920s: "This renewed interest in religious, that is Islamic, teaching may be partly a reaction against the dominance of European power and influence in all other departments of national life, partly a natural turning towards the spiritual by contrast to the increased attention now given to all mundane affairs."[2]

The wider transformations in the Muslim world during the age of imperialism must be considered here because they were entwined with the fates and fortunes of Muslims in Malaysia. The Ottoman Empire was at its lowest ebb, and its entry into World War One on the side of the Axis powers accelerated its decline. In a last gasp for survival, the Sultan Abdul Hamid II called for the unity of Muslims all over the world under a single caliph, an ideology referred to as pan-Islamism. Ottoman emissaries were sent to almost every part of the Muslim world to rally support for this idea. Conferences and meetings with key Muslim leaders were organized. Muslim elites in Malaysia that had maintained close relations with the Ottoman Empire for over a century met with Ottoman representatives during these summits. The advent of the Khilafat movement in India from 1919 to 1924 that rallied the British to prevent the abolition of the caliphate in Turkey further sharpened the pan-Islamism and anti-imperialism brewing among Muslims in the Malay world.[3]

The crises facing the Ottoman caliphate began an intellectual awakening among Muslims globally.[4] In the Arab World, Turkey, and South Asia, Muslim scholars and thinkers were asking the fundamental question: What are the reasons for the decline of Muslims in the modern world? Various diagnoses and solutions were offered, most influential among which were those articulated by Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1839–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1845–1905), Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), Muhammad Abdul Wahab (1703–1792), and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). These thinkers maintained that the root of Muslim backwardness in the modern world was a crisis of thought. Muslims were unreceptive to contemporary advancements in philosophical thought, science, and technology, which they felt would contaminate their faith and beliefs. As a result, they failed to find new ways to make Islam

relevant. Blind imitation and dependence on past styles of thought dominated Muslim minds. Intellectual backwardness meant that the ideas of corrupt leaders, evil scholars, and wayward mystics became dominant in Muslim societies. These were the groups that stunted the ummah's spirit of struggle, impeded their creative capacities, and hindered the Muslims from being the best in all spheres of life, thus making them susceptible to European colonization. The way forward, according to the revivalist thinkers, was to pioneer a renewal and reformation of (tajdid and islah) Islamic thought, to search deep into Islamic history as a source of inspiration while formulating new ideas to enable Muslims to adapt and excel in a modernizing world.[5]

Concomitant with these efforts at reforming Islamic thought was the rise of violent conflicts between Sufi brotherhoods and Western imperialist forces. In much of Muslim Africa during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the European powers were faced with militant movements led by charismatic personalities such as Muhammad Ahmed (1844–1885) of the Mahdiyya brotherhood, al-Hajj 'Umar Tal (1794–1864) and the Tijaniyya brotherhood, Amadou Bamba (1852–1927) and the Muridiyya order, Muhammad Abdullah Hasan (1856–1920) and his dervish movement, and Omar Mukhtar (1862–1931) and the Sanusiyya order. In the Northern Caucasus, the Naqsyabandiyyah Sufi brotherhood led by Imam Shamil (1797–1871) resisted the Russian troops in a war that lasted for thirty years. They were joined by the Jadidis in Central Asia that repulsed Russian encroachment into the Muslim lands.[6] Although based in different parts of the Muslim world, followers and leaders of these Sufi brotherhoods converged in Makkah for hajj and other religious assemblies. There are strong reasons to believe that Sufi scholars from the Malay world who were based in Makkah may have met or kept abreast of the violent struggles launched by members of their brotherhoods during these encounters. The hundred horizons that traveled across the Indian Ocean to the holy city included the Sufis, who were already globalized in their travels and who continued to congregate in Makkah, even with severe restrictions imposed by the Saudi government.[7]

Rapid improvements in information technology from the late nineteenth century onward made news about these intellectual and violent uprisings against colonialism known to the rest of Muslim world at a rate that was never witnessed by the ummah before. Muslim publishing received a stimulus with the development of rotary printing presses. Hundreds of books, newspapers, and periodicals were published within a month in the Muslim cities of Aleppo, Cairo, Makkah, and Delhi, and printing presses had close connections with bookshops and publishers in Penang, Ipoh, Taiping, and Kuala Lumpur. Singapore was the hub of Muslim publishing, where the works of Arab, Turkish, Indian. And other Muslim thinkers were translated into the vernacular and made accessible to the Muslim public

across the Malay world. Books published in Singapore and in Malaya were, in turn, exported back to Makkah, Istanbul, Russia, Egypt, and Bombay. The progress of steam travel cut short the time taken to transport publications.[8] A vibrant and activist Muslim global information order was in motion. Islamic and other ideas were circulating back and forth from the Malay world out to the Muslim world and from the Muslim world back.[9]

Colonialism augmented the intense flows of information and knowledge in Muslim societies. The number of pilgrims making the long journeys to the hajj expanded under the British. Returned pilgrims brought with them ideas they were exposed to in Makkah to the local communities. At the same time, the improved communications in Malaysia made Muslims more conscious of the backward nature of their communities and beliefs. Radios introduced in Malaysia in the early twentieth century made available the latest happenings in the ummah from the Young Turk revolution to the struggle for independence in India and South Africa. With the establishment of a network of railway lines, roads, and ferries that connected rural and urban areas, British Malaya and Borneo became more closely connected. So did the repertoires of Muslim resistance that tapped into colonial technologies of communication and used these instruments of exchange against the colonizers.[10]

Violence

One of the most documented Muslim repertoires of resistance to colonial rule was violence. Not that Malaysia was free of aggressive actions—Muslims there had witnessed violence that tore whole cities asunder, as seen from the fall of Singapore to the Majapahit kingdom in the fifteenth century and the attacks by the Siamese on other Malay states such Patani, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah. Unremitting Siamese assaults on Kedah from the 1820s to the 1840s, for example, claimed hundreds of Muslim lives.[11] The focus here, however, is on violent resistance against European colonial rule. When assessed cumulatively and as a chain of events linked to one another, some general characteristics can be discerned from these episodes of violent resistance. First, they were driven by religious rhetoric, even though the initial catalysts included unhappiness over the loss of revenues and privileges and the imposition of unfair laws and policies. Jihad or perang sabil were the most common terms used to justify the stance against non-Muslims. Second, Muslim men with religious and/or mystical training and prowess spearheaded the violence by Muslims against colonialism. Their competencies in various branches of Islamic and other esoteric types of knowledge coupled with the myth of invulnerability were the most effective means by which these ideologues built up a strong following. Third, these militant groups

drew inspiration from Islamic millenarianism. The leaders and participants imagined the arrival of a savior, be it in the form of a universal caliph, the Imam Mahdi (prophesized redeemer of Islam), or God's angels, who would grant them victory over the unbelievers.[12] Some or all of these features were evidenced in the Naning War in Melaka from 1831 to 1832.

Naning was an area close to Melaka that came under the influence of the British East India Company in 1824. Although not formally part of British territory, local chiefs were made to pay taxes to the British East India Company in exchange of protection of their territories. Quarrels between British officials and local chiefs, most notably Dol Said, over revenues and the administration of native laws quickly escalated to a point where the British sent troops into Naning. The initial attack on Naning was repulsed by Dol Said's forces, who received support from chiefs in the neighboring districts of Rembau, Johol, Sungei Ujong, and Muar. Bound by kinship and religious ties, influential Malay chiefs such as Sayyid Shaban, Datuk Klana Sungai Ujong, Penghulu Linggi, Pembesar Sri Menanti, and Penghulu Gemencheh gave support to Dol Said. Dol Said's claim to supernatural power further emboldened his followers to rally around their leader in his struggle against colonialism.[13] After close to a year of fighting, which saw the deployment of 1,200 Indian troops against poorly armed Muslims, the British finally subdued Naning. Dol Said surrendered on February 4, 1834. Instead of condemning him to the hangman's noose, the British provided for him a house, land, and pension until his death in 1849. The British were all too cognizant of the precariousness of a long-drawn-out battle with Muslims should their unifying icon, Dol Said, be made a martyr.[14]

It took more than three decades before a cycle of violent uprisings took place. Fissures between the Resident and Muslim elites developed merely a year following the signing of the Pangkor Treaty, which marked the beginnings of British intervention in the Malay states. Malay chiefs in Perak became disgruntled over new statutes and the curbing of slavery and bondage. The declining influence of the raja added to the growing unhappiness among the chiefs who once looked up to the king as the protector and patron of Islam. On November 2, 1875, a local chief by the name of Maharajalela murdered the British Resident, James W. W. Birch, at Pasir Salak before launching a violent resistance that last for a few months. Maharajalela eventually surrendered and, along with his followers, was summarily executed. The Raja of Perak, Abdullah, and his other deputies were also found culpable in Birch's murder and were exiled to the Seychelles islands.[15]

These two violent episodes generated rumors and folk tales about the gallant ventures of Dol Said and Maharejalela, inspiring an incessant series of sporadic and collective violence in the ensuing years. A peripatetic group of people, the Malays moved from one state to another in search of better lives as their lands and

homes were progressively being acquired by Chinese and European merchants. The Malay migrants brought with them the stories of anti-colonial resistance and, in so doing, encouraged others to emulate their predecessors. Such was the case in Selangor, which was a few hundred miles from Maharajalela's burial site. In October 1875, a Sumatran-born headman named Sutan Puasa led a militant resistance against the British. Armed with cannons and small arms and reinforced with support by some members of the Malay royalty, this force nearly overwhelmed the British but was soon crushed at Kajang. Sutan and his followers were imprisoned.[16]

A few months later, another uprising erupted at Sungei Ujung, Negeri Sembilan, led by Yam Tuan Antah. Like the Malay chiefs in Selangor and Perak, Yam Tuan Antah detested British interference in Muslim lands. He mobilized a force of 800 to 4,000 men with the intention of driving the British out of his territory. They were filled with optimism that victory was certain, that the caliph in Turkey would eventually send reinforcements, and that they would "make white men into white curry."[17] They were wrong in their estimation of the colonial troops. Inferior in terms of arms and strategy, Yam Tuan Antah's defenses were overrun. Yam Tuan Antah fled to Johore, and after a brief period in exile, he was permitted by the British to return to Negri Sembilan to retire as a minor chief.

The British failed to learn from these events and went on to deny Malay chiefs in Pahang their rights to impose taxes as well as reducing their power and influence. Angered by this loss, a Malay chief from the Semantan district, Dato Bahaman, spearheaded an uprising that stretched from 1891 to 1895. The raja abstained from rendering any support to Dato Bahaman, fearing the loss of his own position. Dato Bahaman secured the backing of other prominent Malay chiefs, namely Mat Kilau, Panglima Muda Jempol, Tok Gajah, and Tok Raja. He assembled the Sakai tribes to join his growing band of fighters. Although they were non-Muslims, the Sakais willingly supported Dato Bahaman because they loathed British logging practices, which had destroyed much of their livelihood and habitat. The violence that broke out on December 17, 1891, claimed the lives of hundreds of Muslims, Sakais, Europeans, Chinese, and Indians. Dato Bahaman and the Malay chiefs used jihad as the mobilizing rhetoric to keep the spirit of resistance alive. They wore talismans and carried specific weapons that they believed would make them invulnerable. The rebels received strong support from leaders of the Naqsyabandiyya brotherhood in Terengganu but were overcome by the colonial forces. Dato Bahaman and his closest aides escaped to the Terengganu and Kelantan; some went as far as Siam before the revolt was totally crushed in November 1895.[18]

Four years later in Sabah, an uprising named after its leader, Mat Salleh, began in Sugut River, spreading rapidly to the Sandakan region. Hailing from

mixed Bajau and Sulu parentage, Mat Salleh was a minor chief who was, like the chiefs discussed earlier, frustrated over British levies, taxes, ordinances, and licenses that disrupted the native economy. Violence against the British began after two of Mat Salleh's men murdered Iban's traders. Mat Salleh refused to surrender his followers to the colonial police. A series of miscommunications between him and the British escalated into a full-blown insurrection that lasted for ten years. Mat Salleh used Islamic banners, royal insignias, and other Muslim and common symbols to keep the resistance alive. His band of rebels built highly sophisticated and heavily armed forts with trenches, tunnels, and escape routes. They launched many well-coordinated attacks against British forces. As the revolt heightened, British officials in London became increasingly worried that Mat Salleh would soon "gain international Islamic support."[19] Their anxieties proved to be unfounded, but the Islamic images that Mat Salleh employed were powerful enough to sustain his cause even after he was killed during a bombardment on January 31, 1899. His followers Mat Sator, Mat Daud, and Kamunta continued a guerilla war until 1905, leaving a legacy of violent resistance that has been memorialized by both Muslims and non-Muslims in Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei (See Figure 6.1).[20]

By the turn of the twentieth century, violent resistance had taken a new turn. The earlier rebels were unhappy with their loss of status and material benefits and used Islam as an expedient yet powerful justification to engage in violent actions



FIGURE 6.1 Mat Salleh Memorial in Tambunan, Sabah

against colonial rule. The new wave of rebellious Muslims, however, were driven primarily ideology—by the sense that the ummah, either or both locally and globally, were underprivileged, under siege, and under attack by the imperialists. Violence was perceived an inevitable means for Muslims to undertake to achieve liberation and self-determination. The entry of Ottomans into the First World War on the side of the Axis powers heightened Muslim awareness about freeing themselves from the yoke of British colonialism. [21]

Although the British were expecting Muslims to engage in some form of rebellion during these heated times, they did not expect violence from those who were guarding their garrisons. When Muslim sepoys in Singapore launched a mutiny, the colonial state was caught flat-footed. The causes of the mutiny were complex, but a major factor sparking the week of violence was the growing unhappiness over the looming possibility of Muslim soldiers being deployed to invade Turkey. Pan-Islamism was at its zenith. A fatwa issued by the Ottoman caliph for Muslims to unite and anti-colonial propaganda by the Ghadar party in India raised doubts among many Muslim servicemen about their colonial superiors.[22] In February 1915, about 400 sepoys commanded by Indian Muslim officers mutinied. The British sought assistance from Russian, French, and Japanese forces to quell the mayhem that claimed more than four dozen British, Malay, Chinese, and German lives. Of the forty-three mutineers eventually arrested and publicly executed, most were Muslims. Among them was Gujerati merchant Kassim Ali Mansoor, who called upon the Ottomans to send a ship to Singapore in aid of the mutiny. The British learned a painful lesson that Muslim allegiances to the ummah would, from time to time, transcended their adherence to the laws and policies of the colonial state. Islam had global resonance. When put in the service of Muslim politics, the globalized faith could move its adherents to commit violence against a non-Muslim power that they perceived as unjust and transgressive.[23]

The sepoy mutiny was stamped out, but its primary stimulus, which was to exhibit Muslims' rage against imperialism, reverberated in other parts of Malaysia. Just two months after order was restored in Singapore, violence broke out in Pasir Puteh, Kelantan. Leading the rebels was an older man, Haji Mat Hassan, more popularly known by his followers as To' Janggut because of his long and bushy beard. He was a member of the aristocratic class, whose circle of acquaintances included prominent Hadrami Arabs and hajjis such as Engku Besar, Penghulu Adam, Haji Said, and Enche Sahak. A learned man who spent several years in Makkah studying under Islamic scholars, To' Janggut was also a practitioner of *silat* (Malay pugilistic arts). Frustrated by the Kelantanese elites' obeisance to the colonial state and unhappy with the dispossession of the Malay peasants and chiefs, To' Janggut gained the support of Muslims through the call for jihad, convincing his fellow rebels that the British Empire was nearing its demise. On

April 29, 1915, the rebels murdered British collaborators and destroyed government properties and businesses owned by foreigners. The British responded by deploying two infantry companies and scores of Malay policemen, indicative of the magnitude of the rebellion. Ill-equipped and with no coordinated plan of action, most of the rebels were killed. To' Janggut's body was hung in public for several days as a severe reminder to all Muslims of colonial retribution in response to any insurrections.[24]

Although collective violence against the colonial state was quashed for over decade after To' Janggut's failed resistance, other forms of aggression remained unabated. Since the 1870s, peasants, farmers, and other ordinary Muslims had committed small-scale acts such as extortion, armed robbery, and banditry against British and other merchants associated with the colonial powers. Of course, such actions had little to do with Islam, but that Muslims were the ones committing them indicates the effects of colonialism on them. As the British muscled their way into many states in Malaysia in the early twentieth century, Muslims felt the pangs of material deprivation. Some Muslims turned to secret societies for assistance and, in the process, were embroiled in crimes against the colonial state and its collaborators. In Northern Kedah, for example, many village headmen and Malay policemen were known to have been bandit chiefs or worked with a group of bandits to protect their territories and to sabotage European and Chinese businesses and farms. The Great Depression of 1929 added to the growing number of crimes committed by rural bandits and gang robbers. These bandits showed ordinary Muslims the shortcomings of colonial rule, that its power was not total. By virtue of their bravery and their generosity to the poor and the needy, bandits were hailed as local heroes and received protection by villagers. Bandits were more than criminals as labeled by the colonial state, they were sources of hope for the oppressed that were memorialized in oral traditions and social myths.[25]

Incidences of banditry were especially high in the Unfederated Malay States, and the bandits sometimes gained protection and material support from pious Muslims who were equally exasperated with the changing times. The rapid increase in population caused by the arrival of Chinese and Indian laborers brought about major food shortages. Peasants were the most affected as more taxes and restrictions were imposed on them in favor of foreign companies and the colonial state. Religious leaders such as Tukku Sayyid Paluh in Terengganu reached out to the raja regarding the suffering of the common people and the fact that Muslims were fast becoming the underprivileged in their own lands. Their appeals were left unheard as the raja was obligated to the British Resident. Together with Sayyid Sagap, Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong, and Lebai Deraman, Tukku Sayyid Paluh and his followers launched protests against British forest regulations and land taxes in May of 1928. Instead of addressing their demands, the protesters

were arrested and their leaders were instructed to abide by the colonial laws that required peasants to apply for passes before engaging in any forms of planting. Undeterred and enraged, the Muslim elites accused the British and their collaborators of having contravened the shari'a. Armed with machetes, kris, and guns and waving the Ottoman flag as they moved from one place to another, the rebels ransacked police stations, government offices, and other state institutions. At Padang Kachong, a group of rebels led by Lebai Deraman confronted the police. Most of the rebels were shot dead. The ringleaders were arrested and quickly banished. The Terengganu revolt marked the zenith of violent Muslim resistance before the Second World War.[26]

The last collective violence against colonial rule occurred during the Maria Hertogh Riots from December 11 to 13, 1950. The bedlam left 18 people dead, including Europeans and Eurasians; 173 others were injured, and 119 vehicles were damaged. The death toll from the riots were the highest in colonial Singapore during the postwar period. The causes of the riots were many, but two stood out: colonial laws and the press that fueled Muslim hatred toward all Europeans and Eurasians in the colony. At the center of the entire violent episode was a Dutch girl, Maria Hertogh (also known by her Muslim name, Natrah), who was adopted and raised as a Muslim by a Javanese woman, Che Aminah. At the age of fourteen, Maria's parents tried to claim her back, and a series of court hearings began in Singapore in May 1950. A group of Muslim radicals, namely Karim Ghani, Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Taha Kalu, Muhammad Mustaza, and Darus Shariff, saw the legal tussle as an opportunity to rouse Muslims against British rule. Karim Ghani dubbed himself an imam of a holy war who would defend the rights of a Dutch girl to remain a Muslim. News coverage of Maria Hertogh kneeling in a Catholic convent heightened Muslim unhappiness. On December 11, the British court ruled that Maria Hertogh was to be returned to her parents. Maria Hertogh's marriage to a Malay teacher, Mansoor Adabi, in the midst of the court proceedings was also deemed invalid as she was considered as a minor under British law. Riled by months of anti-colonial rhetoric, Muslims engaged in a riot that spread to the central and eastern parts of Singapore. It was only after the army was called in that the unrest was effectively quashed. Close to 2,000 people were arrested, the majority of whom were Muslims.[27]

This timeline of Muslim collective violence under colonial rule demonstrates that Muslims were predisposed to using aggression when their rights were breached and when Islamic norms and injunctions were violated by the colonial state and its collaborators. Still, collective violence throughout the British colonization of Malaya never developed into a widespread movement, partly because of the splits within the Muslim community itself. The majority were still obedient to their rajas and traditional leaders and saw rebellions as treason.

Moreover, most of the revolts depended on a few personalities—sometimes only one—and lacked the ideological ballast to sustain them for a long and protracted battle. They were also not well planned and usually lacked enough manpower and weaponry in the face of a highly armed colonial state. On this score, Jürgen Osterhammel was right to observe that colonial states in the post–World War Two period "reacted nervously and harshly to every stirring of opposition. Its guiding principle was never to let the initiative be snatched away and never to lose face. The state always had to have the last word; every provocation was to be punished with retaliation."[28]

Islamic Reformism

Islamic reformism is another strand of resistance that affected landmark transformations in the life and thought of Muslims in Malaysia. Muslim reformers belonged to the literate segment of the Muslim society. They publicized their ideas through written works, founded movements, and established institutions that either lived through or were reincarnated in various forms into the post-colonial period. They solicited the interest and attention of local and foreign observers, enemies and sympathizers alike, because these Muslim reformers were, to use more fashionable and contemporary parlance, "glocal actors."[29] They were well connected, well traveled, well read, well versed in several languages (Western, Arabic, or Malay), and well informed of the latest developments in Malaysia and the world. They derived intellectual inspiration from global intellectual, political and religious streams of thought which they were plugged into. At the same time, they were committed to addressing local problems and offered viable solutions.[30] Islamic reformism in Malaysia, much like elsewhere in the Muslim world, aimed to achieve a number of transformative aims:

1. To rid Muslim minds of *taqlid* (blind imitation) and encourage the use of *akal* (reason) in ways not in contradiction with the spirit of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Prophetic traditions).
2. To correct wrongful beliefs about *taqdir* (fate) among Malay Muslims and promote an optimistic outlook on life.
3. To critique and purify the adat and religious practices from *bid'ah* (innovations) and *khurafat* (animistic superstition) that characterized the Muslim faith.
4. To restructure Muslim educational institutions and make them state-of-the-art schools.
5. To empower women in Muslim societies to become active participants in all realms of life.

6. To combat extremism and practice *wasatiyyah* (moderation) in thought and devotions.
7. To alleviate poverty and Muslim underachievement by advocating for social responsibility and distributive justice.
8. To inspire Muslims to be proud of their heritage, identity, culture, and religious beliefs.

Once achieved, Muslim reformers believed that these aims would lead to a revival of Islamic civilization in the Malay world.[31]

Islamic reformism in Malaysia was a quietist movement with no political aims. But in the long run, the various transformations that the Muslim reformers pushed for changed how Muslims saw their place in an ever-changing yet colonized world. Those who were touched by the reformist call would soon organize themselves into political parties and social movement organizations that promoted Muslim empowerment and independence from colonial rule. Islamic reformism in Malaysia was, in retrospect, anti-colonialism in disguise.

Islamic reformism in colonial Malaysia took on several forms that were intertwined with one another. It was expressed most forcefully in publications: newspapers, treatises, periodicals, pamphlets, edicts, novels, and short stories. Learned, erudite, and sharp, Muslim reformers used their flair in writing to produce numerous works that addressed aspects of Muslim life they sought to reform. The most gifted among the Muslim reformers could alternate between writing fiction and non-fiction, using both mediums to convey the urgency of a renewal in Muslim thought. Sayyid Syaikh Al-Hadi (1867–1934), a Hadrami Arab publisher, novelist, journalist, and educator born and raised in Pulau Penyegat, Riau, was one of them. Together with Syaikh Tahir Jalaluddin (1869–1956), Haji Abbas Mohamed Tahar (1885–?), Syaikh Muhammad Salim al-Kalili, and Syaikh Sayyid Muhammad bin Aqil, he initiated the publication of the *Al-Imam* (The Leader) periodical on July 23, 1906. The periodical's objective was simple yet potent: "to remind the forgetful, to arouse the slumber, to guide those that have been led astray and to give voice to the wise."[32] Inspired by the *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* (The Strongest Bond) and *Al-Manar* (The Lighthouse) magazines founded by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida, Al-Hadi and his band of Muslim reformers reached out to Muslims beyond Malaysia *Al-Imam* was distributed in Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, and other parts of the Malay world, giving more impetus to already active reformist movements there and encouraging the creation of other similar publications such as *Al-Munir* (The Illuminator) in Padang, Sumatra. *Seruan Azhar* (Call of Azhar) and *Pilihan Timur* (Eastern Choice), published by reformist Malay-Muslim students in Cairo, were also partly influenced by *Al-Imam*, and copies

of these periodicals were smuggled into Indonesia and Malaysia.[33] A genre of its own, these writings fostered new ways of thinking about Islam among local Muslims. They challenged long established religious norms, social taboos, and long-standing traditions while encouraging Muslims to be rooted in their homeland without forgetting their duties and obligations to the global ummah.[34]

Al-Imam stopped publication on December 25, 1908, owing to a shortage of funding, but it left a legacy of critique and inspired the making of more vehement critics of age-old Malay-Muslim traditions. An emerging generation of Muslim reformers, dubbed the *Kaum Muda* (New Guard), came launched all-out intellectual attacks on the *Kaum Tua* (defenders of Islamic conservatism) in Malaysia. In spite of such assaults, the Kaum Tua maintained their ideological ground in states where the rajas were securely in place. The rajas and Kaum Tua shared an interest in maintaining the feudal order. Unable to make a breakthrough in kerajaan-held states, the Kaum Muda reformers spread their wings in the Straits Settlements. An exception to this established state of affairs was Perlis. In the mid-1920s, a reformist movement known as the "Sunnah group" secured the backing of the Hadrami Arab raja, Syed Alwi Jamalullail (1881–1943). Since then, Islamic reformism has been the predominant strand of Islamic thought in the Malay state.[35] Other Muslim reformers were not as fortunate. Resistance from the Kaum Tua continued unabated. In Singapore, the Kaum Tua organized a 2,000-strong gathering that passed a resolution that reformers were of lower standing than idolaters and Christians. Some radical supporters of the Kaum Tua also pelted the homes of Muslim reformers with stones, urine, and feces. Periodic violence was commonplace, especially in the 1950s. Such diatribes did not dampen the spirit of the Muslim reformers. They continued to churn out new publications and taught in homes to widen their appeal in Malaysia.[36]

After encountering setbacks in Singapore, Sayyid Syaikh Al-Hadi moved to Penang to establish the Jelutong Press. The shift in locality proved to be enabling. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, Jelutong Press was the most prolific publishing house in Malaysia, producing a large number of fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals, newspapers, and other publications. Among the books that left an indelible mark on the minds of Muslims in Malaysia was a novel, *Faridah Hanum* (1926), in which the theme of female emancipation was explored. Al-Hadi revived the spirit of *Al-Imam* through publications such as the *Al-Ikhwan* (The Brotherhood), *Neracha* (Balance), *Tunas Melayu* (Malay Development), and *Saudara* (Brother). Issues such as education reform, Islamic thought, banks and usury, and harmony between reason and revelation were discussed. The Jelutong Press's success prompted the creation of other reformist publishers. Among the well-known ones were Mat'baah al-Asasiah Press, al-Ahliyah Press, Pustaka Dian, Pustaka Aman Press, Pustaka Antara, Sinaran Brothers, and Qalam

Press Limited. Other newspapers and periodicals, namely, *Pengasuh* (Guardian), *Warta Malaya* (Malaya Gazette), *Majlis* (Council), *Majallah Guru* (Teacher's Magazine), *Melayu Raya* (Greater Malay Nation), *Utusan Melayu*, and, also featured the writings of Muslim reformers.

Other than publishing, the Muslim reformers took up positions in state institutions to pursue their reformist agendas. Muthiah Alagappa has described this as "the deep penetration and influence over the state by certain civil society actors."[37] Muslim reformers maneuvered their way up the ranks of state-linked bodies to achieve specific goals. Through such tactics, they pushed for widespread changes that were impossible to implement because of restrictions put in place by state institutions. Syaikh Tahir Jalaluddin, for example, took up the position as a religious judge in Johor. Born in Minangkabau in 1869, Syaikh Tahir studied in Makkah and Cairo before returning to the Malay Peninsula. A prolific writer and disseminator of the ideas of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida through *Al-Imam*, he enjoined Muslim scholars in Johor to embrace the spirit of jihad and to rise above differences of opinions over jurisprudential matters and to direct their intellectual energies instead to educational reforms and improving the conditions of downtrodden Muslims. He reproached the Kaum Tua ulama, who, to him, had departed from the true teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.[38]

Another renowned Muslim reformer was To' Kenali (1868–1933), a nickname for the revered Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad. After more than two decades of studies in Makkah under the tutelage of Syaikh Wan Ahmad al-Fatani, To' Kenali returned to Kelantan to establish his own pondok. He was also the founder of an organization, *al-Jam'iyyah al-'Asriyyah* (The Contemporary Association), that addressed religious questions posed by Muslims then in addition to teaching regularly at one of the largest mosques in Kelantan, Masjid Muhammadi. Students from Sumatra, Patani, Brunei, Vietnam, and Cambodia traveled to Kelantan to be under To' Kenali's tutelage. Not satisfied with teaching and grassroots activism, To' Kenali was one of the initiators of the *Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan* (Kelantan Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Customs). Formed in December 1915, this body brought the ulama in Kelantan under one umbrella to discuss the challenges of modernity for Muslims. The Council was also the publisher of the *Pengasuh* magazine. It was due to his presence in the state-supported organization that constructive Islamic debates were held without repercussions for any of the contending parties. One highly publicized debate pertained to the impurity of dog's saliva.[39]

Meantime, a student of Syaikh Tahir Jalaluddin, Za'ba worked at the Sultan Idris Teacher's College to spread the ideas of reformism among a new generation of Malays. Although trained as a Malay linguist, he wrote on eschatology, Islamic spirituality, ethics, and Muslim religious practices in the Malay world. He used

his employment as a teacher and translator at the SITC to advocate for the improvement of Islamic education in Malaysia. Za'ba believed that Muslims should empower themselves with proper Islamic knowledge to prepare them for a bright future following the end of colonial rule. Due to his notable contributions in the realm of education and championing of the standardization of the Malay language, Za'ba was hailed by his contemporaries as *Pendeta* (The Reverent).[40]

The impact of Islamic reformism was probably most apparent in the realm of education. Since the late nineteenth century, pondoks and Qur'an schools throughout Malaysia grew in large numbers in reaction to the introduction of modern schools that were often tied to Christian missionizing. Among the ulama who were active in the establishment of pondoks were Haji Wan Ali bin Haji Abdul Rahman (To' Wan Ali Kutan), Haji Nik Abdullah, Haji Awang of Atas Banggul, Hakim Haji Abdullah of Johore, Haji Nik Daud bin Wan Sulaiman, Haji Wan Ismail bin Jamaluddin, and Haji Abdul Samad bin Muhammad Salleh (Tuan Tabal)."[41] In Patani, the most famous pondoks were ran by Syaikh Daud bin 'Abd Allah al-Fatani (1769–1847), who was a product of populist phase of Islamization in Malaysia but lived through the period of European colonialism. He spent most of his life in Makkah and wrote influential tracts that further popularized the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence. Like the Patani scholars before him, Al-Fatani must have felt that the only way to recover the lost legacies of the Patani kerajaan was through educational reforms. The rapid spread of these pondoks could be partly attributed to the patronage given by the rajas and Muslim philanthropists.[42]

The To' or Tuan Gurus (Grand Teachers) of these pondoks would prescribe a variety of texts for students to read and memorize. Classes began right after the morning prayers and would end at 10 p.m. with a meal and other breaks in between. Friday was a day off for the students. Memorization of the Qur'an, Hadith, classical treatises on tasawwuf, Islamic Jurisprudence, and Arabic language and literature was compulsory, and students would be tested on their comprehension of these texts. Most pondoks did not issue certificates. The pondoks were not mere institutions of Islamic learning, they also functioned as centers of Islamic propagation. Teachers and students would go to nearby villages to lead prayers, teach classes, and counsel Muslims in need of advice and guidance. Because of the popularity of these pondoks, many of the graduates would later fill influential positions such as muftis, qadis, ministers, politicians, and state officials. In Kelantan, pondoks became the centers where the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP), later known as the Parti Islam Semalaysia (or Malaysian Islamic Party, or PAS), received its greatest support.[43]

That these pondoks were built on waqf lands and funded through donations meant that the founders and administrators governed these institutions

independently without any direct interference from the colonial state.[44] Students were also nurtured to develop skills that reflected the main thrust of the pondoks: to be resourceful, independent, and self-reliant. As a result, most students developed a strong anti-colonial consciousness in the process as they were taught that only Muslims could be the legitimate rulers of the Malay state. However, such posturing also had some negative effects. The curricula were mostly focused on Islamic texts, and very little emphasis was placed on the mastery of contemporary knowledge and disciplines that would prepare the students for the changing economy. The emphasis on rote learning and regurgitation added to the inability of pondok graduates to disseminate Islamic knowledge in ways that were more appealing to modern Muslims. Hence, even though pondoks were sites of political socialization and spaces where the struggle against colonialism and other forms of oppressive structures was supported, these were also places where traditionalism, blind imitation, and unquestioning acceptance of authority prevailed.[45]

Muslim reformers made changes to the teaching of Islam in Malaysia by establishing new institutions and streamlining existing ones. They encountered the hardest resistance and challenges from the first approach. Al-Hadi inaugurated Madrasah Al-Iqbal at Selegie Road, Singapore, in February 1908. It was the first Islamic school to adopt a modern curriculum and teaching techniques. Religious subjects were taught alongside others such as mathematics, science, history, and English. Muslim girls, who were previously denied formal Islamic education (or any form of modern education whatsoever) due to the force of tradition in Muslim societies, could now enroll in the madrasah.[46] The madrasah received financial backing from Hadrami Arab merchants in Singapore but were closed down after two years due to poor enrollment. This did not signal the end of a new pedigree of Islamic educational institutions. Similar madrasahs were established from in Penang (Madrasah Al-Mashoor, 1914) and in Melaka (Madrasah Al-Hadi, 1917). Seeing the declining numbers of students following the end of the First World War, to' gurus of the pondoks transformed their institutions into a hybrid of the old and the new— a "pondok-madrasah," as some would call it. The Sekolah Pondok Al-Rahmaniah founded at Gunung Semanggul in Northern Perak in the 1920s, for example, metamorphosized from a pondok to a pondok-madrasah system as reflected in its new name, Madrasah al-Ihya al-Sharif or Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif.[47]

Other influential madrasahs established that survived until after the colonial period included Madrasah Alsagoff in Singapore (1912), Madrasah Al-Attas in Johor (1913), Madrasah al-Muhammadiyyah in Kelantan (1915), Madrasah al-Idrisiyyah in Perak (1922), Madrasah al-Arabiyyah in Terengganu (1925), Madrasah Aljunied in Singapore (1927), Madrasah Madrasah al-Madrasah al-Alawiyyah in

Perlis (1930), Madrasah al-Hamidiah in Kedah (1935), and Madrasah Tahzibiah in Sabah (1960s). Hundreds of new madrasahs were built following the Second World War, and many were upgraded into colleges in the ensuing decades. In line with colonial Islamization, the British also financed religious schools and placed them under the supervision of the Islamic councils. Funds were disbursed by colonial state for the setting up of colleges for madrasah graduates. One of these was the Muslim college at Klang in Selangor. The college started its first lessons on February 24, 1955, with a batch of fifty-five students from various states in Singapore and Malaya. The Sultan of Selangor, Sir Hishamuddin al-Haj Alam Shah, officiated at its grand opening on April 8, 1955.[48]

As harbingers of change in Muslim attitudes toward their faith, Muslim reformers were met with strong resistance from the Kaum Tua, who founded their own madrasahs to keep intact the old ways of teaching and disseminating Islamic knowledge. The intellectual (sometimes physical) battles between the Muslim reformers and the Kaum Tua raged on unceasingly in the years to come. To curb the spread of reformist thought in Islamic schools, the Kaum Tua ulama leveraged their influence in religious departments and councils. In Johor, Negri Sembilan, Kedah, and Pahang, they used laws that restricted Muslim reformers from teaching and preaching in these states. These attempts at arresting the spread of reformist ideas were futile in the face of the growth of print capitalism and new informational technologies in Malaysia.[49]

Missionary and Political Movements

One of the unintended effects of colonial rule was that it provided for movements of all sorts to emerge. With the waning power of the kerajaan, Muslims in Malaysia organized themselves into collectives that sought to protect, pursue, and promote their faith. These movements were generally formal in character, with clear manifestos, programs, and goals. They were registered and subjected to restrictions, restraints, and regulations by the colonial state. Movement leaders and participants had to navigate carefully and strategically to ensure their survival in a highly bureaucratized and policed context. Many of these movements were in full support of Islamic reformism, their institutions and objectives, although a substantial number sided on behalf of the Kaum Tua. Viewed in totality, these movements aided in the process of Malaysia's path to independence. They inculcated civic consciousness among Muslims and the realization that the future of Islam was in the hands of the people.

A few movements thrived in the colonial setting, and their objectives sometimes intersected with one another. Missionary movements formed the first cluster. They were a continuation of past efforts at infusing Islam in Malaysia

and a reaction against Christian missionary activities. Everyday resistance against Christian proselytization actually preceded the coming into being of formal Islamic missionary movements. Za'ba explained:

> In spite of the fact that they [Muslims] have been mostly ignorant of the details and the real heart of the religion, they hold fast to it as the best and the only true religion, and no amount of persuasion and argument from outside the faith will make them change their attitude. With all their ignorance of details they have sense enough to appreciate the main ideas of the faith. . . . The average Malay will not read or even touch any Christian tracts or books published in Malay and given to him gratis by occasional colporteurs visiting his village. For this reason it is believed by many intelligent Malays that their countrymen will never fail prey to missionary efforts by other religions. No matter what propaganda is directed towards them, there is no danger that they will ever be turned away.[50]

During his visit to Melaka in the early nineteenth century, a British traveler and missionary, Howard Malcolm, was dismayed that there were no Malay Christians to be found. "The Malays are everywhere Mahometans. . . . Wherever they have spread, they exhibit a vigorous spirit of proselytism; and even where force has never been attempted, they have drawn many thousand pagans to the worship of the true God."[51] Malcolm's observations were prescient. Muslim movements operated and were most active in Malay states where the rajas were no longer sovereigns because Muslims felt that they were most vulnerable to conversion. Furthermore, these states experienced the least censorship and inhibition by the rajas and the Kaum Tua, which gave space for da'wah activities to be carried out by reformist and other, concerned Muslims.

An example of Muslims taking the initiative to found a movement was in Sabah, where the chartered company that had ruled much of Borneo since 1846 encouraged the establishment of churches and Christian evangelism in the area. Fearful of the threat of Christianization, in the 1890s, Muslims in Sabah established an informal collective that worked closely with the Sandakan Jamek Mosque. The number of Muslim converts among indigenous tribes in Sabah grew slowly with the presence of the movement. A census taken in 1921 showed that 31.1 percent of the population were Muslims. Ten years later the percentage had increased to 32.1. In 1951, the percentage of Muslims went up to 34.1 percent—a total of 172,324 persons.[52] It was only in the 1940s that the first mass Islamic missionary movement, the Khairat Jumaat Muslimin (Friday Cooperative for Muslims, KJM), was established. Missionary activities received a new breath of life with the founding of the Persatuan Ikhwan Muslimin (Association of Muslim

Brotherhood, PIM) by a Hadrami Arab teacher and businessman in Singapore, Abdullah Basmeih (1913–1996). Basmeih published the magazine *Qalam* (Pen) with Syed Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid Al-Edrus (more popularly known by the penname, Ahmad Lutfi [1911–1966]). The magazine was distributed in Sabah, as was, and, through it, PIM. Soon enough, a Sabah branch of PIM was established in September 1957. It was closed down two years later due to declining membership but left a momentum of Islamic activism in its path. Other bodies such as the Persatuan Islam Sabah (Sabah Islamic Association, PIS), Persatuan Islam Tawau (Tawau Islamic Association, PIT), and Persatuan Islam Putatan (Putatan Islamic Association, PIP) were the main proponents of Islamization in Sabah.[53]

The island of Singapore was the most vibrant hub for Muslim missionary movements. One organization that blazed the trail was the Moslem Association. Registered on October 20, 1897, and led by prominent Muslim merchants and community leaders, the Moslem Association organized frequent lectures on Islam and organized mass annual maulid as well as the *Eidul Fitri* (celebration of the conclusion of the fasting month). The association was also active in curbing the growth of the Qadiani sect in Malaya. They launched a legal suit against the Qadianis and branded them as disbelievers who were misleading Muslims into heterodoxy.[54] The association also maintained close links with the Ottoman caliph in Turkey—of course, under the watchful eye of the British. In December 1908, another branch of the Moslem Association was set up in Penang. Anglophone elites dominated the organization, and their close cooperation with the colonial rulers earned them the label of colonial stooges by Muslims who felt that the association should remain independent. By the end of 1932, the Moslem Association was dissolved due to the lack of funding and support from the community.[55]

The All-Malaya Muslim Missionary Society, also known as Jamiyah, was registered in the same year as the end of the Moslem Association. Jamiyah's key objectives were to propagate the true teachings of Islam and to combat Christian evangelicalism. Its founder was the charismatic Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddique (1892–1954), a Sufi born in Meerut, India, who had traveled for forty years to more than twenty countries in search of knowledge and in a quest to establish missionary networks wherever he temporarily resided.[56] His lasting impact was probably most felt in Singapore and South Africa. Through Jamiyah, Maulana encouraged Muslims to heighten their knowledge of their faith and to share the universal values of Islam with non-Muslims. Following the Maulana's departure from Singapore in 1933, Jamiyah came under the leadership of Syed Ibrahim bin Omar Alsagoff, a Hadrami Arab landowner and businessman. During his term as president, Jamiyah transformed into a dynamic organization. The first English Muslim magazine in Malaya, *Genuine Islam*, was published. In the three years

of its existence from 1936 to 1939, the magazine featured many articles about Islamic history, society, teachings, and interviews with Muslim and non-Muslim personalities. It was the first magazine in the Muslim world at the time to have reported on the plight of Muslim minorities globally in the English language.[57]

Through his contacts with Muslims in the Arab world, Ibrahim aided the creation of other missionary and welfare organizations. The Muhammadiyah movement in Singapore created in 1958 received substantial financial help and links with Arab financiers through Ibrahim. Jamiyah grew to become such an important movement that during the Japanese occupation of Malaya, it was one of the few organizations that the Japanese depended upon to gain the support of the Muslim public.[58] Jamiyah continued to gain much support from Muslims in Malaysia following the war. Aside from coordinating the hajj, offering religious advice to Muslims, and delving into missionary work, the movement fought for the alleviation of Malay underdevelopment in Singapore and Malaysia. It was among the Muslim movements that opposed the British court's decision that Maria Hertogh was to be returned to her non-Muslim parents.[59]

In Penang, English-educated Indians established the Young Muslim Union (YMU) in 1911, which spent much of its resources and time uplifting Muslim youth. Members of the YMU formed a network of Muslims that supported each other in matters pertaining to education and employment. Scholarships and bursaries were given to poor Muslims needing financial aid. Within a few years of its creation, the YMU opened up branches in Melaka. Even though it was not an Islamic movement dedicated solely to missionary work and enjoyed but a short life span of a little more than two decades, the YMU served as a training ground for many budding movement activists who were committed to the cause of Islam. One of these was Za'ba, who joined YMU in his youth and was moved by its activities and ideology of Muslim empowerment. Other leaders of the YMU would later found movements of their own once their terms of office ended.[60] Among these were the Persatuan Melayu Pulau Pinang (Pulau Pinang Malay Association, Pemenang, established 1927), Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena Malaya (PASPAM, All-Malaya Brotherhood of Pen Friends, established 1935), and Persatuan Melayu Seberang Perai (PMSP, Seberang Perai Malay Association, established 1945).[61]

Finally, no account of the repertoire of Muslim responses to colonial rule in Malaysia is complete without considering political movements. The birth of political movements can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century, when hundreds of clubs and societies were formed to meet with the challenges faced by the Muslims in Malaysia. These clubs and societies were organized around states—the Persatuan Melayu Selangor, Persatuan Melayu Perak, and Persatuan Melayu Pahang, as cases in point. None ever broached the idea of becoming a pan-Malayan political movement.[62] And yet, through these bodies Muslims

from varied occupations, backgrounds, and status in society learned to advocate for their interests even if many of their concerns were inconsequential, such as appealing for spaces for recreational, social, and cultural events. Parochial and apolitical as they seemed, these clubs and societies mustered Muslim confidence to unite and effect changes at a time when the rajas were no longer their benefactors.[63]

The Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS) and PASPAM made the most lasting impression on Muslims in Malaysia. The KMS's founder, Eunos Abdullah, whom we encountered earlier, was a colonial loyalist. Nonetheless, the organization he founded raised Malay awareness of their despondent state of affairs in comparison to all other Muslim communities in Malaysia. Through the KMS, Malay leaders and activists came together to encourage Malays to be more involved in the educational, social, and economic improvement of their community, without shaking the foundations of colonialism. Trained in English, Malay, and Islamic schools and working as religious elites, civil servants, and business people, KMS members made a considerable impact considering the limitations they faced. Its greatest achievement was a 620-acre piece of land solely allocated for Malays in Singapore to build their houses. It was known as the "Malay Settlement."[64] Inadvertently, the KMS made it apparent to the Malays that the British would only allow limited concessions and support for the Malays and that the Malay elites were generally unwilling to question the colonial status quo. A new political movement had to be formed, which came later in the form of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Young Malay Union, KMM).

Meanwhile, PASPAM widened Muslim awareness of Islam and infused political ideas under the pretexts of literary activities. A few personalities were behind this organization: Syaikh Abdullah al-Maghribi, Syed Alwi al-Hadi (the son of Sayyid Syaikh Al-Hadi, 1892–1970), T. M. Syaikh Mohamed, Syed Salleh al-Sagoff, Dr. Ariff, Syed Omar Mahzar, and Tunku Hussain Tunku Yahya. PASPAM was the first pan-Malayan movement that had politics as one of its intended objectives. At its height, PASPAM attracted 12,000 members. Most members were graduates of the Madrasah al-Ihya al-Sharif and were encouraged to join PASPAM by the caretaker of the madrasah, Syaikh Abu Bakar Al-Bakir (1907–1974). These students later formed the core of the first Islamic party, PAS.[65]

All of these clubs and organizations can be described as latent political movements that framed their politics within a wide range of social, cultural, religious, and literary activities. The endgame was to politicize the Muslims but in a manner that would not appear threatening, at least not at first sight, to those in power. These clubs and organizations built the necessary atmosphere and laid the foundations for grassroots activism, which eventually inspired the formation of a full-fledged political movement. That movement was KMM, and it

pioneered a new form of politics in Malaysia. Formed on May 1937 by a group of young Malays from non-elite backgrounds, the KMM reflected the growing frustrations of the Malays over the multitude of changes taking place in Malaysia under colonial rule.

The Great Depression had placed the Malays in the worst of conditions. Various measures undertaken by the British to mitigate Malay unemployment and to reduce foreigners' ownership of lands failed. Poverty hung over the Malay community like a terminal illness. The Malays were left with two options: to mull over their despondency or, as a *Majallah Guru* editorial had it, to look at the bright side of things and regard the Great Depression as if it was "like light that awakened the Malays from their sleep and cured them of their sickness."[66] The KMM members chose the second option. They described themselves as "the *Melayu kiri*" (Malay left) or "the *Melayu radikal*" (Malay radicals), proposing radical solutions to the multitude of problems confronting the community. Malays would be inculcated with the *kesedaran* (consciousness) of their dispossession of a homeland that was rightfully theirs and the urgency to get out of that quandary. The KMM sought to bring about *kesatuan* (unity) under the umbrella of one political movement. The foundation of this unity was the spirit of *kebangsaan* (nationalism) that would be made known to all Malays regardless of their origins, occupations, class backgrounds, or status. The KMM also aimed at realizing a new geopolitical body called the *Melayu Raya*, which was a union of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia to be governed by the locals. The movement's ultimate *cita-cita perjuangan* (spirit and ambitions of struggle) was to achieve *merdeka* (freedom) from colonialism and put an end to feudalism. Through this, the Malays would once again recover their illustrious *warisan* (heritage) that came in the form of powerful sultanates such as Aceh, Melaka, Johor, and Patani.[67]

Warisan, cita-cita perjuangan, kesedaran, kesatuan, kebangsaan, Melayu Raya, and merdeka were the mobilizing concepts that pervaded the writings and discourses of KMM members. They organized programs and activities for the masses to operationalize these concepts even under their restrictive circumstances. Noble and groundbreaking as these ideas were, the KMM did not receive support from the masses, which were still deferential to the rajas and were unwilling to break the stranglehold of colonialism. Moreover, the KMM was divided among two main cliques: the English-educated group spearheaded by Mustapha Hussain (1910–1987) and the Malay-educated group led by Ibrahim Haji Yaacob (1911–1979). Things took a turn for the worse for the KMM when Ibrahim Haji Yaacob decided to collaborate with the Japanese before the invasion of Malaysia. The plot was uncovered, and the British arrested more than a hundred KMM members in December 1941.[68]

The Japanese occupation of Malaya from December 1941 to August 1945 crippled the Malay radicalist movement. Japanese brutality toward all British collaborators and the disbanding of all political movements disturbed the Malay radicals, who felt that they have chosen the wrong partners. While some Malay radicals took the course of cooperating with the Japanese and establishing paramilitary organizations such as the Giyu-gun, Heiho, and *Kekuatan Rakyat Istimewa* (KRIS, The Special Strength of the People, later changed slightly to *Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung,* The Union of Peninsula Indonesians), most preferred living life in anonymity, retreating from political activism. Those dark days, however, awakened the consciousness of the Malay elites that they too should participate in the mobilization of the masses. The days of gaining respect through mere titles and positions were over. The age of mass politics was about to begin.[69]

In the intervening period, the Malay radicals were met with one disaster after another. Sukarno, Hatta, and the revolutionary youth declared Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945, which in one fell stroke smashed the dreams of establishing the Melayu Raya. Muslims in Malaysia who once collaborated with the British were faced with reprisals from the Chinese-dominated Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). The Malay radicals were high on the hit list. Systematic killings of wartime collaborators by the MPAJA swiftly evolved into a pitched battle between Malays and Chinese.[70] At the same, many Malay radicals were rounded up and arrested by the British Military Administration (BMA) for their participation in the torture of civilians during Japanese rule. In those difficult times, new leaders came to the fore and a fresh spirit of anti-colonial struggle blossomed.

As the Malay radical political movement struggled to reinvent itself during the transitional period following the end of the Second World War, other political movements, which could be categorized as "realist," rose to prominence. Amidst differences in orientations and approaches to politics, the radical and realist movements share some common characteristics. They were organized along racial and religious lines; formed, developed, and led by Malay Muslims. From this perspective, these political movements were products of colonialism in that they maintained ethnic divisions among Muslims and between Muslims and non-Muslims. Both political movements viewed Malayness and Islam as important criteria for anyone to qualify as members of their collectives. Furthermore, both the radical and the realist political movements embraced nationalism as a unifying ideology, even though their conceptualization of what the nation ought to be, or "nation of intent," differed profoundly.[71] Both acknowledged that the kerajaan political system during the populist phase of Islamization could no longer be revived and that porous ideas of territory and space were no longer

valid. Borders had to be clearly defined, be it in the form of the Melayu Raya or simply "Malaya," the geographical construct of the British. The nationalism that both political movements advocated rested on the proposition that Malays must be the predominant group in the new nation and that foreigners could be citizens that enjoyed equal freedom but not necessarily equal rights—the Malays were the only group to be accorded preferential treatment.

To this must be added that members of these two political movements tended to shift their allegiances. Some Malay radicals such as Aisha Ghani (1923–2013) and Mustapha Hussain became disillusioned with leftist politics and joined the more conservative United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Similarly, some UMNO members ditched the party to join the radicals. The founder of UMNO and the adopted son of the royal family in Johore, Dato Onn, for example, resigned from his party to found a new party, the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP, 1951–1953) and then the Parti Negara (1954–1952), which forged a coalition with other radical parties. The Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP, later known as PAS) was once the Islamic bureau and welfare section within UMNO before it splintered off to be a party opposing its progenitor. Politics in Malaysia then, as it is now, was like shifting dunes. Comrades could become adversaries and adversaries turned into friends. The only thing that was constant and permanent was that everyone vied for power.

The radical political movement expanded rapidly as it campaigned for the rapid end of colonialism. Among the major organizations that made up the movement were the Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM, also known as the MNP, Malay Nationalist Party), the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf ("Generation of Awakened Youth," or API), the Majlis Agama Tertinggi Malaya (MATA), the Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA), the Hizbul Muslimin (or Partai Orang Muslimin Malaya, HM), the Angkatan Wanita Sedar ("Generation of Conscious Women," or AWAS), the Barisan Tani SeMalaya (BATAS), the Pemuda Radikal Melayu (PERAM), the Gerakan Angkatan Muda (GERAM), the Parti Komunis Malaya (PKM), the Parti Rakyat Malaya (PRM), the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), the Parti Islam Semalaya (PAS), and the Angkatan Sasterawan 50 (ASAS 50). Members of the radical political movement played major roles in political, educational, social, and cultural institutions toward ending colonial rule. For them, the laws, values, and norms promoted by the colonial state and its Malay collaborators went against the welfare of the common people, denying them their freedom and basic rights. At its height, the PKMM alone boasted close to 100,000 committed members.[72]

Much like in the prewar period, the path taken by the radical political movement was progressive just as it was perilous. In the three years after the Second World War, this movement mobilized almost all sectors of the Malaysian

Muslim community. The youth, the elderly, teachers, peasants, housewives, ulama, writers, journalists, and even police officers were touched by the message of self-determination. A few individuals were the drivers of the radical movement. Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy (1911–1969) was the ideologue in addition to Ahmad Boestamam (1920–1983) and Shamsiah Fakeh (1924–2008), who stirred the youth and women to be involved in mass politics. These figures were visionaries of their time. They drew inspiration from Muslims and non-Muslims, employing a variety of resistance strategies of Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose in India, the socialist movement in Europe, as well as revolutionary Islamic and nationalist movements in Indonesia. To expand their appeal, the radicals blended communist, Islamic reformist, socialist, Third-Worldist, and nationalist elements into their ideology and programs.

The Malay radicals organized rallies, marches, and congresses to discuss pertinent issues in Malaysian society. They also published treatises and newspapers—the *Suara Rakyat* (Voice of the People), *Pelita Malaya* (Light of Malaya), *Suluh Malaya* (Torch of Malaya), and *Melayu Raya*—that received wide reception among the politically charged Malays in the postwar era. Some radicals joined the revived *Utusan Melayu*. One of them was Abdul Samad Ismail, who transformed the newspaper into the conscience and the voice of the colonized people.[73] The Malay radicals also promulgated four innovative organizations: the PERPEMAS (Pusat Perekonomian Melayu Se-Malaya, or the Pan-Malayan Center for Malay Economics), LEPIR (Lembaga Pendidikan Rakyat, or the Institute of Citizens' Education), MATA (Majlis Agama Tertinggi Se-Malaya, or the Pan-Malayan Supreme Council of Religious Affairs), and the Hizbul Muslimin (Muslim Party), to address a host of political, economic, educational, and religious problems unresolved by the colonial state, the aristocratic elites, and religious scholars. Hizbul Muslimin worked toward the realization of a *Darul Islam* (House of Islam) in Malaysia, where the state, society, institutions, and movements would all adhere to the shari'a. All Muslims, according to the Hizbul Muslimin, must view politics as an essential part of Islam and therefore take part in the political process. Its branches could be found in many parts of the Malay Peninsula and also Sabah.[74]

The radicalist movement was the first political movement to have brought together all Muslim and non-Muslim organizations in joint resistance against colonial policies. They envisaged a new form of Malay nationalism, *kebangsaan Melayu*, that would unite all groups—racial, ideological, and religious. Toward that end, they formed the PUTERA-AMCJA (Pusat Tenaga Rakyat-All-Malaya Council of Joint Action) in August 1947, a conglomerate consisting of Malay, Indian, and Chinese trade unions, parties, and associations to rally against the Malayan Union plan. Through the plan, the British wanted to bring all Malay states under a single administration. Unwilling to accept colonial-imposed

constitutional arrangements, the PUTERA-AMCJA proposed the Peoples' Constitution and organized a Malaysia-wide strike, or hartal, that saw the closing of schools and businesses in October 1947.[75] The radical political movement was, however, severely crippled when the Malayan Emergency was in full swing in July 1948. More than a hundred radical activists were incarcerated. Many went into hiding for fear of arrest. Others took a militant stance and joined the 10th Regiment of Malayan Communist Party (MCP) to fight a guerilla war against the British that formally ended in the 1980s.[76]

Although the British came down hard on the radical political movement, they permitted the growth of other political parties and introduced elections in Malaysia in the 1950s to prepare the country for self-government. By giving more space for political activism among the Malaysians and eventually independence, the British rejected the communists' justification for their militancy.[77] Undaunted by the constraints imposed on them and capitalizing on the limited scope given to them to operate politically, the radicals kept their activism alive by opening new fronts in the campaign to end colonialism. The radicals organized the Kongres Pemuda Melayu (Malay Youths Congress) on April 11, 1955, forming a pan-Malaysian political force that would swing the votes during the legislative elections in that year. Former UMNO leaders such as Dato Onn and his Parti Negara joined the radicals together with representatives from forty Islamic, youth, and non–Malay-Muslim parties and organizations. But the Malay Youths Congress did not achieve its ambitious goals. Ideological fractures within the radical political movement made it difficult for a united coalition to stay intact. Dr. Burhanuddin joined the PMIP as its third president and adopted a more pro-Malay and pro-Islamic political posture. Dato Onn, in turn, felt that the coalition must focus more on universal values toward a brand of nationalism that saw all communities as equal. Although a resolution was reached to the effect that the Barisan Kebangsaan Melayu (BKM, or Malay Nationalist Front) was to be formed to participate in the 1955 elections, very little was done to impress the masses of the radical political movement's ability to run a new government. The BKM won only one seat during the Federal Legislative Council elections.[78]

The Alliance, led by UMNO, received almost the full mandate of the people by winning the remaining fifty-one seats. Soon after the elections, Ahmad Boestamam, along with Harun Aminurrashid and Ishak Haji Muhammad, founded their own party, the Partai Rakyat Malaya (PRM, or People's Party of Malaya), and publicly stated that the new entity differed from all other parties in BKM. Burhanuddin tried to bridge these divisions by organizing a Malay National Congress in May 1957.[79] By then, the Congress carried no weight. The radical political movement had lost its charm. The Alliance was the peoples' choice, and they received added support from the British and the Malay rulers.

The Alliance's success could be attributed to the largely unimpeded route that the realist political movement undertook in Malaysia. Fronting the realist political movement was UMNO. Registered on May 11, 1946, the party brought together many Malay organizations from across the Malay peninsula. By the close of 1947, the total paid membership of UMNO was more than 25,000.[80] UMNO's strategic advantage was that it received royal patronage unceasingly through the years. Indeed, UMNO took center stage when it came out strongly against the Malayan Union proposals. UMNO campaigned for an alternative, known later as the Federation of Malaya.[81] Radical parties such as the PKMM and PMIP were actually part of the coalition with UMNO. But as soon as the Federation of Malaysia agreement were made, these two parties withdrew because they could not see eye to eye with UMNO over matters pertaining to citizenship rights for non-Malays and collaborating with the British in the road to independence. The rift between radical and realist political movements grew wider from this point, with the radicals accusing the realists of being neocolonialists and the realists responding by branding the radicals as extremists. Still, under Dato Onn's able leadership from 1946 to 1951, the party expanded and incorporated a women's wing, a uniformed youth section, and a department dealing with Islamic matters in addition to other divisions focusing on educational and economic issues.[82]

UMNO's other trump card was a close relationship with the British and Malay elites as well its ability to evolve quickly in response to changes in political climate. Dato Onn and later on Tunku Abdul Rahman positioned UMNO as a centrist party that shunned all forms of militancy and was willing to work with the British toward addressing Malay demands. Concurrently, the party mobilized penghulus and headmen to run its activities at the village level. While the Malayan Emergency had left the radical movement in disarray, UMNO benefited it. Many former radicals entered into UMNO's ranks and transformed its approach to politics. Under the new president of UMNO, Tunku Abdul Rahman (1903–1990), it took on the radical movement's rallying cry by changing the party's slogan from *Hidup Melayu* (Long Live the Malays) to *Merdeka* (Freedom).[83] Moving beyond agitating for Malay rights, UMNO built an alliance with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The Alliance won the 1955 election with a resounding victory. It gained more ground for its responses to the Reid Commission in 1956 that was tasked with drafting the would-be constitution of Malaysia. The Alliance memorandum touched on a variety of issues such as citizenship for migrants, Malay rights and the national language, the defense and security of Malaya, and national education. Among the Alliance's most enduring proposal was that "the religion of Malaysia shall be Islam. The observance of this principle shall not impose any disability on non-Muslim nationals

professing and practicing their own religions, and shall not imply that the State is not a secular state."[84] This clause established the place of Islam in the Malaysian constitution and, subsequently, in society at large. In August 1957, Tunku was elected the first prime minister of an independent Malaysia and the first builder of a "Malay-triumphalist Islam."

PART IV

Triumphalist Islamization

7

Constructing a Malay-Triumphalist Islam

THE ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT inherited from the British a geopolitical and administrative architecture that it could not easily dismantle. The waning of European colonialism did not mark the demise of its hegemonic forms of knowledge as well as the institutions, laws, economic systems, social organizations, and political frameworks that were anchored in the everyday lives of the colonized. Colonialism placed former colonies, as Ann Stoler puts it, under duress so much so that these seemingly independent countries and nations could not escape "the hardened, tenacious qualities of colonial effects; their extended protracted temporalities; and, not least, their durable, if sometimes tangible constraints and confinements."[1] In the case of Malaysia, such duress could be discerned from the makeup of its population. In the year of its independence in 1957, there were slightly more than 6 million people in the Peninsula Malaysia, divided into racial groups that had become largely distinct from one another. Half of the population was classified as Malays, 37 percent were Chinese, Indians constituted 11 percent, and the rest consisted of indigenous tribes and other minority groups. The Chinese were concentrated in the urban areas. The Malays formed the large bulk of the rural population, and Indians dominated villages in rubber plantations and in poor neighborhoods within towns. Most Indians belonged to the lowest rung of society.[2] Malaysia, during this time, was a polarized country, divided across religions, racial, class, as well as rural-urban divides. It was also a domain affected by the forces of secularization. Although visible in terms of adherents and institutions, Islam was of marginal importance in the overall running of Malaysia as a whole. Islam was disaggregated from the political, economic, and legal systems—a religion that mattered only in the lives of Muslims, not Malaysians in general.

Postcolonial leaders of Malaysia struggled to overcome this state of duress by promoting a version of Islam that was both ethnicized and triumphalist, which I call "Malay-triumphalist Islam." When viewed as a powerful process backed by the state and by grassroots organizations and fired by the forces of nationalism, Islamic revivalism, and communalism, it could be appositely termed as triumphalist Islamization. I use these two terms interchangeably. More importantly, triumphalist Islamization showed much continuity and entwined features with its colonial predecessor in that many of the institutions and laws were maintained but some changes were apparent. Elite Malay Muslims politicized Islam to achieve their respective aims and ambitions. They colored the religion with strong Malay undertones, reflecting a given ethnic group's will to reconstruct a country whereby they, followed by Malay Muslims of other classes and ranks, would be predominant within as many spheres as possible. In this phase of Islamization, Malay-Muslim elites desired dominance, compliance, and the conversion of non-Muslims. Their penultimate objective was to make Malays more Islamic, globalized, and activist so as to position Malaysia as a model and leading Muslim-majority state that would redress the challenges faced by the ummah in general.

In this and the next chapter, I examine how this triumphalist Islamization became entrenched in Malaysia. There are three key phases; this chapter deals with the first, the foundational phase, which consists of the premiership of the first three prime ministers, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak, and Tun Hussein Onn (1957–1981). Malay-triumphalist Islam was made the ideological basis of the new nation-state and implemented in a manner that reflected the nominally Islamic temperament of these three leaders and the volatile conditions in the country. In the next chapter I will examine the second phase, best described as the assertive stage of triumphalist Islamization (1981–2003). Mahathir Mohamad's rise to power along with the entry of prominent Islamic activists such as Anwar Ibrahim into the ruling government promulgated a spirited state Islamization that entrenched Islam in all facets of Malaysian life. Adaptive leaders who saw the revival of Islam as both a challenge and opportunity for the ruling government to remain in power, Mahathir and Anwar marshaled the creation of a new crop of middle-class Malay Muslims. These Malay Muslims expanded the da'wah movement that seeped into state structures and into all other realms of life, causing unease on the part of non-Muslims. Finally, I will look at Malay-triumphalist Islam in its reinvention phase (2003–2017). Frustrated with communalism that had affected relations between Malaysians since independence, a new generation of globally connected and cosmopolitan Muslims called for radical changes in the course of Islamization. They were inspired by protest movements in other parts of

the world and questioned Malay-triumphalist Islam, which had benefited only a fraction of the Malaysian population. The scandals surrounding Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak and many other Malay-Muslim leaders placed the Alliance into a deep crisis that led to its fall from power.

Constitutional Islam and Its Avatars

It has often been assumed that state Islamization in Malaysia began in earnest only during the tenure of Mahathir Mohamad. According to this view, the reigning politicians in UMNO that preceded Mahathir were generally "ethnic-secularist" in their outlook and visions. These politicians used Islam as a mere symbolic tool to capture votes during election periods and appease pro-Islamic factions in society in moments of political instability.[3] Such a view provides us with an incomplete picture of the contributions of Malaysia's pioneering group of Muslim parliamentarians. Alternatively, I argue that even if their approaches to Islam and Islamization were minimalist and deceptively symbolic, they planted seeds of Malay-triumphalist Islam in the laws and politics of the nascent nation-state. Once ensconced and set in motion, future Muslim leaders and activists built on the legacies left behind by earlier Muslim politicians to expand Islam's position in the running of the country, constantly invoking the faith in public discourse.

The first class of Malay-Muslim leaders engraved Islam in the Malaysian constitution. Through the Alliance Party, they campaigned many months before Malaysia's independence for Islam to be the official religion. Negative responses to this proposal came from the rajas. To them, the formalization of Islam as an official religion would erode their long-held position as patrons of the faith. The federal government and court, so the rajas argued, would eventually be the source of reference and the ultimate arbiter for matters relating to Islam. The Alliance Party compromised by retaining the rulers' function as the patrons of Islam in their respective states. The new constitution, also called the "Merdeka Constitution," provided the rulers with personal immunity, which had, in effect, expanded their powers and prerogatives, once limited by the British. The late Sultan of Perak, Raja Azlan Shah, described the making of the constitution "a masterpiece of compromise" in favor of the rulers.[4] Interestingly, the non-Malay–dominated parties, the MCA and the MIC, did not object to the formalization of Islam in the constitution despite resistance from a number of non-Muslim organizations. For the MCA and MIC, Tunku Abdul Rahman's pledge that non-Muslim rights would be duly protected was sufficient in a context when independence from colonial rule was the larger objective.[5]

A number of provisions in the Malaysian constitution highlight the importance of Islam, the most palpable of which are in Article 3 (1–5), which states:

(1) Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.
(2) In every State other than States not having a Ruler the position of the Ruler as the Head of the religion of Islam in his State in the manner and to the extent acknowledged and declared by the Constitution of that State, and, subject to that Constitution, all rights, privileges, prerogatives and powers enjoyed by him as Head of that religion, are unaffected and unimpaired; but in any acts, observances or ceremonies with respect to which the Conference of Rulers has agreed that they should extend to the Federation as a whole each of the other Rulers shall in his capacity of Head of the religion of Islam authorize the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to represent him.
(3) The Constitution of the States of Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak shall each make provision for conferring on the Yang di-Pertuan Agong the position of Head of the religion of Islam in that State.
(4) Nothing in this Article derogates from any other provision of this Constitution.
(5) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall be the Head of the religion of Islam in the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya; and for this purpose Parliament may by law make provisions for regulating Islamic religious affairs and for constituting a Council to advise the Yang di-Pertuan Agong in matters relating to the religion of Islam.

Commenting on this article, Mohamed Suffian Hashim (1917–2000), a former Lord President of the Federal Court and one of the drafters of the Malaysian constitution, maintained that the place of Islam in the constitution was largely symbolic. Islam's presence in the form of prayers and other ritual practices could be discerned during major events such as the installation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and other state ceremonies.[6] Tunku Abdul Rahman (hereafter referred to as "Tunku") underscored this point by stressing that even if Islam had a towering existence in the constitution, this did not in any way imply the denial of non-Muslims rights (See Figure 7.1 for photo of the Tunku). Nor did it denote that Malaysia was an "Islamic state," like Pakistan. Tunku remarked: "I would like to make it clear that this country is not an Islamic State as it is generally understood, we merely provide that Islam shall be the official religion of the State."[7]

His remark flies in the face of Article 11 of the constitution. Clause 1 states: "Every person has the right to profess and practise his religion and,



FIGURE 7.1 The first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman

subject to Clause (4), to propagate it. Every individual has the right to profess, practice and preach his religion or belief." In Clause 4, the constitution states: "State law and in respect of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya, federal law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam." Similarly, in Article 12 (2):

> Every religious group has the right to establish and maintain institutions for the education of children in its own religion, and there shall be no discrimination on the ground only of religion in any law relating to

> such institutions or in the administration of any such law; but it shall be lawful for the Federation or a State to establish or maintain or assist in establishing or maintaining Islamic institutions or provide or assist in providing instruction in the religion of Islam and incur such expenditure as may be necessary for the purpose.[8]

Altogether, the articles that embedded the status of Islam in Malaysia were articles 5, 8, 11, 12, 37, 38, 74, 76, 121(1A), 150, 153, 160, Fourth and Ninth Schedules of the Federal Constitution.[9]

Viewed cumulatively, it is clear that the constitution privileged Islam and Muslims as the foremost religion and group that would receive full protection and promotion by the state. More to the point, while the founding leaders of Malaysia maintained that the country would remain secular, the word "secular" was not included in the constitution. There was no written clause stating that Malaysia was and would remain a secular state. This suggests that the constitution drafters knew that Islam would eventually influence major developments and policy decisions in the country. Or as Abdul Aziz Bari observes: "Contrary to public perception, the issue of Islam is obviously quite central to the Constitution. Indeed, it may be said that Islam forms part of the essence and foundation of the constitutional framework."[10] What the early drafters of the constitution did not anticipate was the advent of Islamic resurgence that would bring about a different reading of the place of Islam in the constitution which would include all facets of Muslim thought and life. Kristen Stilt underscores the Malay-triumphalist Islam that shaped the making of the constitution and the implications thereafter. In including Islam as an establishment clause in the constitution, UMNO

> provided extra insurance that these and other guarantees and privileges would be made meaningful. UMNO did not seek to include the establishment clause as an expression of the religion of the majority of the citizenry, but rather UMNO and Malays in general sought it so desperately because they were *not* the majority, at least not a comfortable majority, and feared what the democratic process might bring in the future. UMNO assured the MCA and MIC that it would not affect their rights to freely practice their own religion, and indeed UMNO might have intended that to be the case. But no one knew what a religion of the Federation clause would mean in courts after independence, nor how politicians would use it to their own rhetorical, and tangible, ends, nor how the world of constitutional Islam—and, relatedly, political Islam—would develop in the coming decades.[11]

Malaysia's first-generation leaders went much further than to state the importance of Islam and the responsibility of the state to be the guardian of the faith and its adherents. They upheld the colonial state's definition of Malayness. In Article 160, a "Malay" is defined as

> a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and—(a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or (b) is the issue of such a person.

Should any Malay Muslim choose to renounce "Muslim," he or she was no longer a "Malay" by law. Nor was this all. In pursuit of their Malay-triumphalist Islam, the early leaders of Malaysia included in the constitution a number of provisions that acknowledged the special rights of the Malays and indigenous peoples. This was a consociational bargain or social contract, as it was known, among elites from different communities at the time. The acceptance of these special rights and *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay dominance) was counterbalanced with jus soli citizenship for the non-Malay communities that had resided in Malaysia for a number of generations. With the inclusion Sabah and Sarawak in 1963, the Kadazandusuns and Muruts were also categorized as *bumiputeras* (soils of the soil), who would receive special state assistance for education, religion, property ownership, employment, and other special privileges. The notion of indigeneity, which was first introduced by the colonial state, was given a wider meaning under the postcolonial government. To be indigenous, one need not necessarily be a Muslim. But a Muslim who habitually spoke the language, practiced the Malay culture, and was accepted by the state as part of the community, as seen in the case of the Hadrami Arabs, could claim indigeneity or bumiputera status from 1957 onwards.[12]

Tunku Abdul Rahman and the Malay leaders of his generation were not content with Malay-Muslim dominance in the Malay Peninsula. Within a few years after the creation of the Federation of Malaysia, on May 27, 1961, the Tunku declared his intention of creating a "Greater Malaysia." This new geopolitical construct would include Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei in the main body of the federation. In public pronouncements, the Tunku justified Greater Malaysia in the wake of the threat of communism and the economic benefits that could be gained. Greater Malaysia would bring more wealth and a better distribution of resources and expertise while guaranteeing the independence of those that remained under British jurisdiction. In private, Malay leaders in the federation were concerned with projecting Malay-triumphalist Islam to other budding states. They desired the expansion of UMNO's influence. For the Tunku,

Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei were, in essence, "Malay territories." He wanted to create a large and unified political space dominated primarily by the Malays and those who were regarded as indigenous to the Malay world, thus harking back to the hegemony of Malay sultanates during the populist period of Islamization. Whether the indigenous peoples identified themselves with the Malays was not a matter of concern to the Tunku. He was confident that they would eventually assimilate into the Malay community through religious conversion and other policies.[13]

The Tunku and the Alliance leaders also eyed the largesse of natural resources that Brunei, Sabah, and Sarawak offered. Oil was discovered in abundance in Brunei in the early twentieth century, and the other Borneoan states were rich in timber.[14] Like the colonial powers that came before them, the UMNO government wanted control of these resources and forecast that Borneo states would be the fuel for the development and modernization plans of states in the Peninsula Malaysia. Toward that end, Malay-Muslim leaders from the mainland were to be sent to these states to develop grassroots support and work together with local leaders who were friendly to UMNO. These leaders would ensure a smooth flow of resources between the different parts of Malaysia.[15] To address the prospect of non-Malay (i.e., Chinese) political dominance, the Tunku excluded Singaporeans from voting and engaging in political activities other than in Singapore itself. Sabah and Sarawak were, however, granted a large percentage of seats in the Malaysian parliament. Indeed, Singapore was a barb in Tunku's grand design, but it had to be included in Malaysia to arrest the prospect of another Cuba in the Malay world. The Tunku finally agreed to include Singapore when fellow Alliance leaders assured him that the total mix of Malays and indigenous peoples—4 million in total—in Greater Malaysia would outnumber the 3.7 million Chinese.[16]

Greater Malaysia did come into being, but not in the form Tunku envisioned. Brunei opted out due to Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III's unwillingness to sacrifice the territorial integrity of the kingdom.[17] Relations between politicians in Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore as against the Alliance were strained from the outset as these states had their own unique features and social dynamics that did not combine easily with those found in Peninsula Malaysia. Sabah and Sarawak, also known as East Malaysia, were divided into Iban, Kadazan, Malay-Muslim, and Chinese communities. Upon their withdrawal in 1963, the British left in their place indigenous leaders in district and town councils as well as the other strategic legislative posts in the former colonizer's bid to mitigate the Chinese dominance in Borneo's economy. Placed in the position of relative influence and power, the indigenous leaders (both Muslim and non-Muslim) initially saw the merger with Malaysia as disadvantageous for them. Things changed after a militant revolt in Brunei by A. M. Azahari (1928–2002) and his Parti Rakyat Brunei (PRB) in

December of 1962. As the threat of communism, subversive activities emanating from the Philippines, and the outbreak of a confrontation with Indonesia, whose claims to the Borneo territories were looming on the horizon, political leaders in Sabah and Sarawak made an about-face and accepted the proposal to be part of Greater Malaysia or, simply, Malaysia.[18]

The internal troubles that these Borneo states faced added to the crises that were already developing in the movement toward creating Greater Malaysia. In Sarawak, the Malay Muslims were plagued by the age-old problem of poverty and heavy borrowing from Chinese businessmen borne out of their extravagant lifestyle. Malay Muslims were fond of organizing large feasts, grand weddings, and flamboyant festive gatherings. Malays also lagged behind in terms of education as well as in literacy and a mastery of English compared to the Dayaks.[19] Malay-Muslim grassroots leaders were divided over how to overcome these problems. One feasible solution was reform by way of politics. From 1955 on, new political parties were found and old political collectives were revived. Among these were Barisan Pemuda Sarawak (BPS), PANAS (Parti Negara Sarawak), and BARJASA (Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak), all of which advocated for improvements in education for the Malays.[20] These parties called for the alleviation of poverty in the community and also more government aid for the establishment of Islamic institutions. In reaction to this rising Malay-Muslim political sentiment, indigenous tribes and communities formed their own parties, namely, the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PAPAS or PESAKA). These parties were proponents of Kadazandusun nationalism. The Chinese, in turn, formed and dominated the multi-racial Sarawak United Peoples' Party (SUPP) to push their agenda into the evolving political landscape. Prior to the formation of Greater Malaysia, PANAS was overtly supportive of the idea as a step to gain independence and as a medium by which Malay Muslims in Sarawak could receive more financial, educational, and social assistance from the Federation. Other parties were generally less keen because they felt that the Tunku was imposing UMNO's authority upon the Borneo states. These political divisions persisted even after the formation of Malaysia, only to fade away when Datu Bandar Abang Haji Mustapha (1906–1968) and Abdul Rahman Yakub (1928–2015) were appointed ministers in Sarawak. They dissolved the rivalries between Malay-Muslim parties. By December 19, 1966, all Malay-Muslim political parties were merged to form Parti Bumiputera (PB), which became politically influential. PB worked together with other Sarawakian political parties to provide the Alliance government a majority in parliament until the late 1970s.[21]

The situation in Sabah was not much different from Sarawak. The Malays and indigenous peoples were left behind in education and were at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder in comparison to the Chinese. Under British

rule, political activities were circumscribed until the Tunku proposed the idea of Greater Malaysia. Tun Mustapha Harun (1918–1995) founded the United Sabah National Organization (USNO) in 1961. Although open to all natives, party members were mostly Malay Muslims. Non-Muslim indigenous peoples joined the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO) and the United National Pasok Momogun Party. Meanwhile, the Chinese filled the ranks of a few small parties that merged at the end of 1962 to form the Sabah National Party (SANAP). Smaller political parties such as the Liberal Party barely took off in Sabah. Like Sarawak, the Alliance gained the support of these parties by assuring them of relative autonomy in matters pertaining to native religion, immigration, judiciary, language, education, presentation in parliament, and citizenship. Like Malay special rights enforced in Peninsula Malaysia, these provisions arose out of the demands made by political parties in Sabah as preconditions before joining Malaysia.[22]

Because political activism in Sabah and Sarawak was still in its embryonic stage during this period, most parties depended on the Alliance for funds and other expertise. The Tunku was called upon to be the middleman between warring East Malaysian politicians, and in so doing he steered the two states in the direction of Malay-triumphalist Islam. An astute politician, the Tunku accepted a bargain with East Malaysian politicians that Islam would not be the official religion of Sabah and Sarawak. This formal concession did not stop the federal state and local politicians from pushing for Islamic programs and other proselytizing mediums in the two Borneo states. In Sarawak, the *Majlis Agama Islam Negeri* (State Islamic Religious Council) and the *Jabatan Mufti* (Mufti Department) were institutionalized. Continuing Tunku's policies, the new prime minister, Tun Razak, amended the state constitution in 1973 to include Islam as the state's religion while protecting the freedom of other religions. In Sabah, the Berjaya government led by Harris Salleh from 1967 to 1984 supported Qur'anic reading competitions, funded Islamic schools, and encouraged missionary activities, to a point that Christian communities complained of his partiality toward Muslims.[23] The native Kadazandusun, Murut, and other communities were encouraged to embrace Islam with the promise of better employment prospects and other benefits. Christian missionaries, however, were deported, and many had their residential permits canceled or not renewed.[24] The Malay language was taught in government schools as a means to expose indigenous children to the language of the majority Malay Muslims in the Malaysian Peninsula. In instances when Sabah or Sarawak threatened secession in opposition to federal policies, the Tunku and his successors did not hesitate to issue stern warnings, in addition to removing non-compliant East Malaysian politicians from office and sending troops to crush potential rebels.[25] In other words, starting from Tunku's era, a "dominant

Malay Muslim culture from West Malaysia was being imposed on East Malaysia in an effort to create a shared Malaysia-wide 'Malay will.' "[26]

The relationship with Singapore was far more tumultuous—and predictably so in view of UMNO's reservations over the island's demography and their suspicions that most Chinese in Singapore supported either socialism or communism or leftist politics. In the UMNO politicians' eyes, the Chinese in Singapore were largely loyal to China and did not readily identify themselves with Malaysian locals.[27] Adding to this were the demands made by both Singapore and Malaysia politicians. Driven by Malay-triumphalist Islam, UMNO leaders wanted full control of Singapore's internal security, defense, and foreign affairs. In the merger agreement, the Singapore state government had to cede 40 percent of its annual revenue, a $150 million loan to Sabah, and Sarawak and agree to the establishment of a common market for Singapore and the rest of Malaysia. The People's Action Party (PAP) government in Singapore accepted these terms to achieve the merger. Adding to these potential sources of tension was the PAP's later decision to participate in mainland politics. The PAP rapidly became a political force in Malaysia. The party gained much traction in the 1964 general elections among non-Malays in the urban areas, much to consternation of the Alliance leaders.[28]

Months of political mudslinging wrought the communal sentiments that were already brewing among different communities in Singapore. In July and September of 1964, riots broke out in Singapore, claiming two dozen lives and hundreds of others injured. The riots did not relieve the tense political atmosphere. On November 25, 1964, Alliance leaders proposed that Singapore contribute 39.8 percent of the sum of $147 million to rectify a $543 million deficit in the Malaysian budget. Singapore politicians reacted by organizing the Malaysian Solidarity Convention to encourage multiracial parties in Greater Malaysia to pursue the goal of realizing a "Malaysian Malaysia" rather than a "Malay Malaysia." Seeing no prospect of political reconciliation and haunted by the recent bloodshed in Singapore, the Tunku decided on August 9, 1965, to end Singapore's inclusion in Malaysia. Tun Abdul Razak, the deputy prime minister of Malaysia, had this to say about the separation:

> Let us regard the separation as similar to the separation of Siamese twins—the separation of two children, born together in the womb of Malaysia, by an operation for their own good. You will find in every case of the separation of Siamese twins, there remains a mental bond between them, after their physical separation. They are still brother and sister, or still sister and sister and have an instinctive bond which is thicker and deeper than the skin which originally joined them together. This is how I like to think of Singapore because although there have been differences, there is still

> a bond that unites us in our differences, and there is no reason whatever why we should not walk forward firmly together towards the future and progress in harmony like separated twins.[29]

The Tunku was, however, relieved that Singapore was finally separated from Malaysia. When asked some years later whether the separation was ultimately his personal decision, he responded: "Yes, entirely mine and if there is any blame, I accept it. But in my mind, deep in my heart, that was the correct policy. Otherwise the Chinese would dominate our country, completely dominate this country of ours with their population of two million more than Malays."[30]

With Malaysia now firmly under the Alliance's sway, several grand projects were commissioned to propound Islam as a core constituent of the Malaysian identity and to position Malaysia as a country devoted to furthering the cause of Muslims overseas. Mega-mosques were built throughout the country, one of which was the Masjid Negara (National Mosque) in Kuala Lumpur. It was constructed in 1965 as part of Tunku's aspiration to forge a national identity via iconic Muslim architecture. The National Mosque blends the old and the new, the traditional and the modern. The main prayer hall was designed like a traditional Malay house with an umbrella-shaped roof and concrete stilts. A 73-meter-tall minaret, which looks like an antenna, was linked to the mosque to reflect, as architectural historian Tajudin Rasdi notes, the "spirit of the times" and "true Malaysian identity."[31] Since the creation of the National Mosque, grand mosques have been built almost yearly, each rivaling the other in terms of aesthetic beauty and size. All, if not most, of these mosques have embodied the styles developed in the Arab world, Turkey, and Iran to project Malaysia as an emerging Islamic country.[32]

The Tunku was also heavily involved in the founding of PERKIM (*Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia*, or the Malaysian Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association) in 1960. This was a missionary body presented to the public as a "moderate if not conservative charitable organization sponsored by the government geared toward assisting recent converts to Islam."[33] PERKIM propagated Islam through charitable works, educational activities, and medical assistance to the Chinese and indigenous groups. Its prime movers believed that Islam was best preached not through sermons and classes but through welfare work. PERKIM worked closely with the *Harakah Islamiah* (HIKMAH), Sarawak, the United Sabah Islamic Association (USIA), and the Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA) to expand its reach among non-Muslims. Other Islamic bodies established during the Tunku's premiership were the *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia* (JAKIM, or the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) and the *Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia* (JKSM, or the Department of

Shariah Judiciary Malaysia). Members of the royalty such as Permaisuri Agong Tunku Khurshiah supported Tunku's Islamization schemes by establishing the Lembaga Kebajikan Perempuan Islam (LKPI, or Council for the Welfare of Muslim Women) in 1960 to assist Muslim women at risk and encourage their participation in social as well as missionary work.[34]

Fond of majestic events to demonstrate Malay Muslims' piety in a decolonized and resurgent Muslim world, the Tunku promoted the idea of the *Musabaqah Qur'an* (Qur'anic Recitation Competition) at the national and international levels. On the surface, these annual competitions were but a mere display of the vocal prowess of hundreds of expert *qaris* (persons who recite the Qur'an) from around the world, but they served other functions as well. Aired live in the age of television, such competitions were an indirect way of disseminating the universal teachings of Qur'an to the general public. These events were also powerful channels by which Muslims could further internalize and memorize their sacred text. The Tunku yearned for Malaysia to become the "Makkah of Qur'an enthusiasts"[35]

Beyond developing into a "Makkah of Qur'an enthusiasts" in the decades that followed, the Malaysian government was deeply embroiled in agitating for disadvantaged Muslims worldwide and providing support for international Islamic organizations. Criticized in the late 1960s by Muslims globally for recognizing the state of Israel, UMNO leaders backtracked by pressuring the government to avoid any diplomatic relations with the Jewish government. UMNO openly endorsed Algeria's bloody struggle for independence from French rule and backed the Palestinian endeavor to regain their homeland. To be sure, Malaysia was the first Muslim country to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), permitting its leaders to establish an office in Kuala Lumpur. During press interviews, the Tunku and other Malay-Muslim politicians raised their concerns about the plight of civilians in South Thailand and the South Philippines as secessionist movements and military interventions disrupted the everyday life of Muslims in these areas. The Tunku also mobilized state resources to provide shelter and other forms of support for refugees from these conflict zones, condemning all forms of state violence toward Muslims. He championed the creation of a "Muslim Commonwealth" and was nominated as the first Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Formed in 1970, the OIC was an international body that deliberated on the development of Muslim countries. The Israeli occupation and oppression of the Palestinians occupied much of the OIC's summits.[36]

Yet, for all the support that the Tunku showed to Muslims in Malaysia and the world over, he was in the last analysis pro-British. An Anglophile who grew to admire the British during his years studying law in England and as a district

officer in Malaya, he could not easily shed the Western outlook that defined his worldview and predisposition. Tunku felt that Malaysia had greatly benefited from the British and should work with its former colonial masters an attempt to surmount a whole array of challenges in a decolonized world. Although secular in outlook and lifestyle, Tunku wanted more space for Islam and for Malays in Malaysia but not to the extent of embracing PAS's vision for an Islamic state. Tunku's Malay-triumphalist Islam entailed the crippling of all other equally triumphalist Muslim ideologies. Wary of PAS's Pan-Islamic rhetoric and the party's close links with Islamic activists in Indonesia, Tunku jailed PAS's third and most popular president, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, as well several others from the party on the pretext of conspiracy against the state.[37] Tunku subscribed fully to the notion of Malay Muslims being predominant in their own homeland and living by their own norms and cultures. But he wanted the plural society that the British had left behind to remain in place. He stressed that the Chinese and other non-Muslims were equal citizens in Malaysia and were the economic drivers of the country. Hence, much of his time in office was spent in the company of rich Chinese, to the annoyance of Malay-Muslim elites. At the same time, Tunku was faced with Chinese radicals who questioned special privileges given to the Malays upon Malaysia's independence. In one instance, he revoked the citizenship of the president of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA), Lim Lian Geok, in view of his views on state education policies that promoted Malay education above others.[38]

Tunku's economic policies were, in the last analysis, elitist. His government did not relieve the destitution of peasants and Malays in general. He was almost oblivious to the social inequality that increased under his stewardship and ineffective in combating the corruption commonly referred to as the "Ali-Baba arrangement." Malays would hand over or sell the business licenses given to them by the state to Chinese entrepreneurs. His laid-back predisposition and yielding approach to Chinese elites, who he thought would work together with the majority bumiputera population to build a strong and independent Malaysia, earned him enemies from among his closest friends and hard-line Malay-Muslim activists.[39] Put succinctly, outside Malaysia, Tunku drew considerable admiration from Muslim statesmen and politicians globally for his care and concern for development and progress in the Muslim world and fighting injustice against Muslims. In domestic affairs, he could barely live up to his reputation as the Father of Independence. He could not close the yawning gaps among his "children," nor did he have the political muscle to bring them to an equitable compromise.

Two landmark events paved the way for Tunku's exit from prime ministership, which, in effect, drove triumphalist Islamization to a more racialized passage. The first was the 1969 general elections that saw the Alliance losing its

two-thirds majority in parliament. A total of fifty-four seats were lost to opposition parties, namely, Gerakan (Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia or the Malaysian People's Movement), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and PAS. Radical UMNO activists placed the loss squarely on Tunku's shoulders. Tunku was too soft on the non-Malays, and his grandiose Islamic projects barely addressed the long-standing problems of poverty and underdevelopment. As sharp critiques were hurled upon Tunku and his ability to lead the country, on May 13, 1969, riots broke out between Malays and Chinese in various parts of Kuala Lumpur, which resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives. *Darurat* (national emergency) was declared. The parliament was suspended and managed by a caretaker government, the National Operations Council (NOC, or Majlis Gerakan Negara), for a period of two years. The chairman of the NOC and would-be prime minister was Tun Abdul Razak, who regarded the NOC's function as crucial in bringing Malaysia out of "the darkest period in our national history."[40] The NOC consisted of politicians from UMNO, MCA, MIC, top Malay civil servants, and military as well as police chiefs. It was reflective of Malaysia's multicultural makeup. The NOC had to deal with questions posed by UMNO leaders over whether the consociational bargain between elites from different races has worked to the advantage of ordinary citizens—most crucially, the bumiputeras. This process of questioning was coated with Islamic undertones. Not only had Malays benefited little from the policies of the postcolonial government, but Islam was increasingly under threat as Muslims became increasingly disenfranchised in the national economy, social life, and in politics.[41] Tunku's vision of a cosmopolitan Malay-Islamic identity that would embrace non-Muslims as fellow countrymen was shattered, partly due to his own making.

Barely recovering from the shock of the riots, Tunku was faced with an all-out discrediting of his leadership by the "Young Turks" in his own party. At the forefront of the movement against Tunku was a young medical doctor, Mahathir Mohamad. Born in 1925 and raised in a lower middle-class family in Kedah, he was moved by the call for Afro-Asian solidarity that grew out of the Bandung Conference in 1955. Mahathir and his group of UMNO loyalists called for an end to the stark inequalities in Malaysian society where Malays were most wretched. In an open letter, this group demanded Tunku step down as prime minister. This was followed by the publication of Mahathir's controversial book, entitled *The Malay Dilemma*, which put forth a Darwinian argument about Malay backwardness. According to Mahathir, the Malays were inferior genetically and lagged behind due to early marriage, inbreeding, and the rural environment they were exposed to for many generations. The laid-back culture had made Malays unable to compete with the immigrant races who were already well ahead in many areas of life. Mahathir used this reasoning as a basis to justify institutional affirmative

action policies. "Until this is done," he wrote, "the deleterious effect of heredity and environment on the Malays is likely to continue."[42]

Tunku labeled the faction that discredited him the "ultras" of UMNO and expelled Mahathir from the party the same year as the riots. Mahathir's book was banned, his house ransacked, and he was put under police surveillance for many months.[43] What Tunku did not duly acknowledge was that Mahathir and his supporters were products of the same Malay-triumphalist Islam that he had promulgated. Both Tunku and Mahathir wanted ketuanan Melayu to be entrenched. Both saw the necessity of addressing Malay-Muslim backwardness above all else in their plans for a new Malaysia. Both also saw Malaysia as a prospective model Islamic country as the Muslim world rose from the ashes of colonialism. The two men may have remained perpetual enemies from the 1960s on, but they never disagreed on pushing for and building a new generation of Malay Muslims that would form the vanguard of a triumphalist Islamization.

Mahathir's ouster did not hinder the growing unhappiness with the Tunku both within UMNO and in the larger Malay society. Tunku's powers as the prime minister had already been severely curtailed by NOC's expansive functions. As his popularity waned, the NOC regained public confidence by establishing the Department of National Unity and the National Consultative Council (or *Majlis Perundingan Negara*, MAPEN) as a forum to discuss interracial relations. Elections in Sabah and Sarawak were held in mid-1970 after a brief period of suspension. This time, the Alliance won the majority of seats in these two states. On September 22, 1970, Tunku resigned and paved the way for the ascension of Tun Abdul Razak (1922–1976).[44] Not a particularly charming and eloquent politician, but certainly a stern leader who could get things done in times of crisis, "Tun Razak" was referred to by friends and foes alike as the *Bapa Pembangunan* (Father of Development). However, he did more than transform Malaysia into an economic powerhouse.

Development with Malay and Islamic Characteristics

Tun Razak brought Malay-triumphalist Islam to a whole new level through laws, policies, and a muscular bureaucracy that effectively magnified the importance of ethnicity above that of Islam in Malaysia. For Tun Razak, the riots were a caustic warning to any aspiring head of state that they should attend to Malay anxieties and demands above all else. His policies, both locally and domestically, were largely a reversal of Tunku's "democratic excesses."[45] Granted that he was Tunku's most loyal deputy and confidante and he shared Tunku's shunning of the idea of an Islamic state. He was not on the same page with Tunku in matters

surrounding the Chinese. As soon as he took on the prime ministership, Tun Razak spared little time winning over the hearts of the Chinese. He believed they must yield to Malay clamor for a greater share in the country's economy. Malaysia would only become a unified nation when the rights of the most deprived—the Malays—were exercised to the fullest extent. Hence, once installed as the most powerful man in the country, Tun Razak hampered democratic procedures to implement policies that would emphasize the favored status of Islam and the Malays.[46] Emergency laws that remained in operation kept the growing student radicalism in check. Security forces were sent from time to time to disperse many student demonstrations and protests. The use of the Internal Security Act and amendments made to the Universities and University College Acts crippled many campus organizations and caused thousands of students to be arrested. In November 1974, the military was sent to the University of Malaya. That month and the few that followed are best remembered as the highpoints of campus unrest involving lecturers and students.[47]

Drawing from the Indonesian state ideology, *Pancasila*, Tun Razak proclaimed a national ideology that he hoped would bind communities together and root out the machinations of extremist forces. The *Rukun Negara* (National Principles) rested on five principles: belief in god, loyalty to the king and country, upholding the constitution, rule of law, and good behavior and morality. The second principle clearly named Malay Muslims as the predominant group in Malaysia. The king here referred to the "Yang Dipertuan Agong" or the "Monarch of Malaysia," who were Malay Muslims or those who were accepted as part of the Malay-Muslim community. Historically, the kings were representatives and symbols of Islam and Malayness. By including that principle in a newly constructed national ideology, Tun Razak was underlining the fact that Malaysia was essentially a Malay homeland. The Constitution Amendment Bill in 1971 further engrained the rights, language, and religion of the Malays as well as the indigenous peoples in Sabah and Sarawak. Malay was declared the national language, though other languages were acknowledged. All school subjects with the exception of English-language learning were to be taught in Malay. This switch to the Malay language signified the growing sense of Malay nationalism just as it occasioned the inculcation of Islam in Malaysian schools through other means. The Malay language was, after all, the language of majority Muslims and it was a language that was imbued with Arabic-Persian Islamic words and concepts. Out of pragmatism and the fear of another outbreak of interethnic conflict, most Chinese elites agreed to the bill.[48]

Tun Razak underscored Malay supremacy by implementing a quota for bumiputeras in the civil service and appointing more Malay Muslims to chair important ministries. With the parliament under his grip, Tun Razak pressed on to institutionalize the New Economic Policy (NEP) as part of the Second

Malaysia Plan. The NEP was aimed at eradicating poverty and restructuring society in order to diminish interethnic disparities in Malaysia. The main target was to reduce the poverty rate in the Malaysian Peninsula from 49 percent in 1970 to 16 percent in 1990. Through this, the problem of economic backwardness among certain ethnic communities could be resolved. Critiques of the NEP and the Second Malaysia Plan were quick to point out that these schemes were ill-conceived, unrealistic, and partial. Though meant for all Malaysians, the NEP's main recipients were Malays.[49]

For the Malays who were barely coping with the fast-changing Malaysia, the NEP was a gush of fresh air they sorely needed. The reality was that, by 1970, the Chinese filled most of the high-ranking positions in government service and they were preponderant, too, in the private sector. The Chinese held a range of technical, managerial, professional, and administrative positions. Although largely indifferent to politics, the Chinese were actually running the country. The percentage of Indians employed in medical, legal, and educational services was also higher than that of Malays.[50] The NEP was designed to fix this imbalance. Upon its implementation, 30 percent equity of all non-Malay–owned companies was given to bumiputeras, making them instant entrepreneurs, the *Orang Kaya Baru* (New Rich), and an emergent crop of Malay-Muslim middle class. Poverty, or at least absolute poverty, was undoubtedly reduced with the early implementation of NEP. Shares owned by Bumiputeras grew exponentially from USD 42.5 million dollars in 1970 to more than USD 4410 million dollars in 1985. The flip side of this was the development of intra-ethnic inequality as the NEP benefited only a small fraction of the Malay-Muslim community.[51] The NEP was, in the last analysis, a lever for the advancement of Malay-triumphalist Islam, promoted and benefited by Malay elites. This would remain so until the 1990s.

Tun Razak's approach to opposing Islamic forces was in notable ways different from that of his predecessor. He reached a political compromise with PAS to join what was known as the "Barisan Nasional" (BN) in June 1974 by assuring the Islamic party that the ruling government would infuse Islamic values into the civil service and the nation as a whole. The BN consisted of UMNO, PAS, MIC, MCA, People's Progressive Party (PPP), the Sabah Alliance, Gerakan, SUPP, and Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB). The president of PAS, Dato' Mohd Asri Haji Muda, was instrumental in bringing the party into joining BN. This marriage of mutual interests was unthinkable—in fact, downright inconceivable—during Tun Abdul Rahman's time, and it lasted only until 1977. Though short-lived, the entry of PAS into BN left an indelible mark on Islamization in Malaysia. The idea of Muslim unity in Malaysian politics was realized for the first time. Even if for a brief moment, it was a momentous episode that would be invoked by Muslim

forces in the years to come. What Tun Razak had done was to "set in motion a progressively engaging relationship between Islam and the state."[52] Akin to the kings during the kerajaan phase of Islamization, Tun Razak positioned UMNO as the patron, protector, and promoter of Islam in Malaysia. Later in the 1980s, Mahathir emulated Tun Razak's footsteps and took a leap further by declaring Malaysia as an Islamic state or a state inundated with Islamic laws, norms, and values.

Outshining Tunku, Tun Razak expanded and founded a number of influential Islamic institutions to bolster UMNO's Islamic credentials. The BN government funded the building of grand mosques and the construction of more modern Islamic schools, imbuing more Islamic subjects in national school curricula while establishing quasi-governmental bodies dedicated to Islamic missionizing efforts. The *Pusat Islam* (Islamic Centre) and the *Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia* (YADIM, or Islamic Dakwah Foundation of Malaysia) grew in scope and manpower as they received large grants and aid from petrol-rich Muslim states such as Libya, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. The *Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam* (INDAH, or Islamic Dakwah and Training Institute) and the *Pusat Penyelidikan Islam* (PPI, or Islamic Research Centre) swelled in terms of staff strength under Tun Razak. On August 16, 1971, Tun Razak launched the *Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* (National Cultural Policy), which avowedly embedded Islam as a pillar of the national culture. While recognizing the significance of indigenous cultures and the relevance of other cultural elements in the forging of a national culture, Tun Razak viewed Islam as the lynchpin of the Malaysian identity. The BN government's long-term aim was to instill an Islamically oriented national culture that was at once universal and adaptable.[53]

As for Islamic education, the government was confronted with a large number of students enrolled in privately owned *Sekolah Agama Negeri* (SAN, State Religious Schools) and *Sekolah Agama Sakyat* (SAR, People's Religious Schools). The 1957 Education Ordinance and the 1960 Rahman Talib reports that called for a comprehensive transformation of the derelict state of Islamic schools in the country did not achieve major progress.[54] The majority of these schools were left badly managed and poorly maintained. Situated mostly in rural areas and linked to PAS or religious groups, these schools were anti-government in their outlook. Tun Razak government did not seek to close these schools, but, as part of its Malayization plans, provided support and funding only to Islamic schools that were willing to come under the purview of the Ministry of Education through its Islamic Education Division. This division improved the quality of the teaching staff, curriculum, and facilities of the SARs and incorporated them into the *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama* (SMKA, National Religious Secondary Schools) system. Islamic studies and other subjects such as mathematics, science,

geography, and history were introduced in these government-sponsored schools for students to have a wider option of furthering their studies in local or foreign universities where Islamic studies and non-Islamic studies disciplines were offered. By 1974, all religious teachers teaching at primary schools were placed under the payroll of the Ministry of Education, paving the way for the government to have more control over Islamic schools at other levels.[55]

In the larger Muslim world, the BN government presented Malaysia as a progressive country that was active in the advocacy of Muslim rights globally. Malaysia's roles in the OIC, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and the International Islamic News Agency increased. The country was the archdefender of the dispossessed Palestinians and called for the end of Israeli occupation. During the height of the Arab–Israeli war in 1973, the government raised funds to aid the Arabs throughout the conflict. Close relations with oil-rich Arab countries worked to Malaysia's favor. From 1969 to 1975, the volume of bilateral trade increased by more than USD 400 million dollars, with Arab countries pledging hundreds of million dollars more to assist in Malaysia's development. Tun Razak distanced himself from Tunku's pro-West stance. The Malaysian government advocated neutralism and made a firm stand against the apartheid regime in South Africa. Tun Razak pressured the heads of states that attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) to oppose the British government's sales of arms to the regime.[56]

While seeking to present Malaysia as an Islamic nation, Tun Razak was faced with a global Islamic resurgence that was an upshot of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the oil embargo from 1973 to 1974, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the Iranian revolution in 1979. The global Islamic resurgence in the 1970s made its presence felt across Southeast Asia, which inevitably vitalized missionary activities in Malaysia.[57] PAS and the newly established Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) were among the most vocal groups that questioned the state's policies on Islam. UMNO and the NEP, according to the da'wah activists, were driven primarily by secularism and materialism. To the da'wah activists, the government used Islam to score political points both domestically and internationally, and its commitment to the furtherance of Islamic causes was skin-deep. The government reacted by detaining Anwar Ibrahim in 1974 after he led a protest defending the plight of Kedah peasants in Baling. Twenty-two months of detention made Anwar a persona non grata in the eyes of the state but a cause célèbre among Muslim youth. Anwar convinced them that implementing the shari'a would not threaten the position of non-Muslims in the country. On the contrary,

when applied in the most just way possible, Islam could bring about harmony and justice for all in Malaysia.[58]

Anwar's arrest did not impede the growth of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. In fact, his years behind bars emboldened other da'wah activists to ramp up their missionary efforts, burgeoning an alternative triumphalist Islamization. Mainstream organizations such as the Tablighi Jamaat forged closer links with other activists and also state-sponsored bodies in Libya and India. Even UMNO ranks were moved by the call to return to pure Islam and to agitate for the establishment of the shari'a in Malaysia. Some da'wah activists took an extreme stance and went as far as to attack non-Muslim religious places. In 1978, Muslim zealots stormed Hindu shrines in Ulu Selangor, which led to their deaths. In another incident in 1981, twenty men in white robes attacked a police station in Batu Pahat, Johor. The skirmish ended with nine killed and two dozen injured.[59]

Tun Razak did not live to witness the impact of Islamic resurgence on Malaysia. Diagnosed with leukemia six years earlier, he succumbed to his illness on January 14, 1976, at a hospital in London. Tun Razak's deputy and brother-in-law, Tun Hussein Onn (1922–1990), was appointed as the third prime minister of Malaysia. He was stepping in for a workhorse who had aggressively pushed for triumphalist Islamization and who wanted the Malay Muslims, in particular, to manifest hard work and tireless devotion in the shaping of a young nation. The big shoes that he had to fill coupled by the rapidly changing Islamic landscape placed heavy burdens on an ailing Tun Hussein.

In the five years he was prime minister (1976–1981), Hussein Onn maintained much of the Islamic policies under the Tengku and Tun Razak. Hussein was a consistent defender of Malay-Muslim rights, and this earned him strategic positions such as the minister of education and home affairs under Tun Razak. But he did not have the strength of will, the firmness of character, or the popular appeal to accomplish what his brother-in-law did. He did not wield elite support and took on the role of prime minister by default rather than by way of popular vote. His greatest challenge was factionalism within the UMNO and the BN. One of Hussein's passionate critics was Tunku Abdul Rahman, who after joining the *Star* newspaper as a columnist had used his pen to criticize his former party. To Tunku, Hussein was "hardly known and was not even expected to succeed Tun Razak, at least not in the way events happened."[60] Making matters worse was the competition for the position of deputy prime minister among Ghafar Baba (1925–2006), Tengku Razaleigh, and Mahathir Mohamad. When Hussein decided on Mahathir as the deputy prime minister, the other two contenders withdrew their

support for the government and took their supporters with them. Hussein's detention of UMNO leaders and former advisors of Tun Razak on charges of corruption and complicity in communist-related activities further tainted the prime minister's reputation in the BN and with the public. Instead of winning over his critics, Hussein used the force of law to curtail political discussions and deregister lawyers who censured the government.[61]

Hussein also tried, with little success, to subdue the overwhelming tide of Islamic resurgence. He launched the National Dakwah Month in 1977, pledging that the government would build more mosques and Islamic schools and augment Malaysia's role in international Islamic organizations—to assist Muslims globally.[62] Da'wah activists were barely taken in by these guarantees. Inspired by the call to establish an Islamic state in Malaysia as exemplified in aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979, da'wah activists called for the creation of a society that was free from the excesses of false beliefs and ungodly ideologies. While most da'wah activists were generally peaceful and spent their energies on missionary activities through preaching, education, and welfare work, some developed exclusivist tendencies. They demanded the forceful conversion of non-Muslims and even violent overthrow of the state. Among such groups were farmers in Kedah, who were influenced by Shi'ite revolutionary ideology. In January 1980, they rallied more than 10,000 followers to stage a protest against the government's handling of padi prices.[63]

Hussein was unsuccessful in maintaining Muslim political unity under the BN banner. He castigated PAS for utilizing Islam for political ends and denounced da'wah groups for exploiting students. PAS leadership too was displeased by the BN allocation of seats and the appointment of a UMNO politician, Haji Mohamad Nasir, as Menteri Besar of Kelantan following the 1974 elections. PAS reacted with a vote of no confidence against the new Menteri Besar, prompting Hussein to declare emergency in the state of Kelantan. Troops were sent to Kota Bharu in the likelihood of violence. This and other disagreements over the UMNO's Islamic policies led to PAS's withdrawal from the BN.[64]

Hussein also lost the support of non-Muslim elites. The MIC was displeased by the government's educational policies. The government gave minimal support to the downtrodden Indian community who needed scholarships and better educational institutions in order to escape from the poverty trap. Hussein had, however, used the NEP to fund Malay and indigenous corporations. He continued Tun Razak's policies of widening bumiputera's influence in the economy and went much further. In 1975, the BN government introduced the Industrial Co-ordination Act (ICA), which effectively increased bumiputera equity ownership from 4.3 percent in 1971 to 9.2 percent in 1975. Several agencies, namely,

Yayasan Pelaburan Bumiputera (YPB, or Bumiputera Investment Foundation), *Permodalan Nasional Berhad* (PNB, or National Equity Corporation), and *Amanah Saham Nasional Berhad* (ASNB, or National Unit Trust Scheme), were established to transfer corporate shares from non-Malays to bumiputeras. Despite the policies that Hussein put in place, Malay employment in multinational companies remained low and unemployment among the Malays was higher than in other communities.[65]

Hussein walked in the shadow of Tun Razak and used foreign policy as a tool to display the Malaysian government's commitment to triumphalist Islamization. Malaysia received more loans and grants from oil-rich countries that were used for the Third Malaysia Plan and to implement its own Islamization projects. Malaysia was a key partner in the establishment and growth of the IDB.[66] The Malaysian government also joined other major Muslim countries in cutting off trade links with Israel and giving their moral and material support to Muslims in war-torn countries. During the 19th International Qur'an Reading Competition, Hussein emphasized the need for unity and non-violence in resolving problems faced by Muslims, particularly in Israel:

> Muslim unity should convey the message that we wish the world to recognize us as a community and that we do not like our views and opinions to be set aside or to be ignored completely. . . . The government and the people of Malaysia would like to reiterate that they strongly support the rightful struggle of the Palestinian people and other Muslims in West Asia.[67]

Hussein, however, remained guarded toward Islamic groups in Malaysia that were forging close ties with the Islamic revolutionary government in Iran. For all his failings, under his brief premiership, Hussein anchored Malay-triumphalist Islam in most aspects of Malaysian life but not at the level where the state could steer Islamic resurgence to its favor. His poor health made it difficult for him to devise any elaborate plans. On July 16, 1981, Hussein Onn resigned as prime minister.[68] The task of championing triumphalist Islamization was left to his immediate successor and Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad.

In the next and concluding chapter, I examine how the Malaysian government under Mahathir, Abdullah Badawi, and Najib Tun Razak aggressively nationalized and statized Malay-triumphalist Islam that began in Tunku's era. The government did not have full control of the course of Islamization, nor could it co-opt all grassroots activists. I show that da'wah movement exercised a high

degree of agency in influencing state programs, just as it had asserted its independence in Islamizing Malaysia on its own terms when the state was perceived as unreliable, corrupt, unjust, and oppressive. To put it succinctly, the nationalization of Islam under Mahathir and subsequent prime ministers developed in tandem with the Islamization of the nation and the state by Islamic activists. Caught in the web of this struggle between two competing triumphalist Islamizations were the lay Muslims and the non-Muslims.

8

Nationalizing Islam, Islamizing the Nation

WHEN MAHATHIR MOHAMED took over the mantle of prime minister in 1981, he found his government at the vortex of multiple currents of change, each of which was advocating a triumphalist agenda. At the crest was the da'wah movement that was calling for a total Islamization of Malaysia. The movement had established its roots in Malaysia since the colonial period in the form of Islamic reformism, growing in strength and influence from the 1970s onward despite many setbacks. New laws prohibiting the formation of Islamic societies on campuses, the arrests and cracking down on movement leaders, as well as state propaganda regarding "radical" and "extremist" Muslims and the branding of da'wah activists as a band of close-minded, conservative, and utopian zealots barely weakened the da'wah activists' efforts to make align the nation with Islamic precepts. Any scholar working on Malaysia in the 1980s would not fail to notice a marked increase in the number of Islamic schools, Muslim bookstores, pilgrims undertaking hajj, Muslims attending prayers in mosques, popular Islamic lectures attended by thousands in addition to the growing number of women wearing the *hijab* (headscarf) and *mini-telekung* (large head cover that extended to the shoulders and chest) and men donning *songkok* (skull caps), turbans, and robes. Previously regarded as ideologies that Muslims had begun to accept, secularism, materialism, and liberalism were discredited and condemned in a variety of Islamic books, pamphlets, and magazines. All of these made the Malaysian government anxious about Islam's revolutionary potential.[1]

The cogency of the da'wah movement stemmed from its ideology, organization, leadership, and networks. Ideologically, Islamic activists maintained that Muslims globally were in a state of intellectual and religious crisis, leading them to relegate Islam to a marginal position in their lives. Colonialism and Western secularism gave rise to such crises, and the policies of postcolonial states have

barely resolved the manifold problems besieging Muslims. The way out of this predicament, so Islamic activists reasoned, was to return to the spirit of the Qur'an and Sunnah and to reinstate Islam as all-encompassing frame of reference that structures laws, politics, economics, education, health, and all other aspects of the day-to-day lives of Muslims and non-Muslims.[2]

As a corollary to this, ideologues of the da'wah movement such as Syed Naquib Al-Attas and Kamal Hassan proposed "Islamization of Knowledge" (IOK), which provided alternative conceptions of human knowledge. Proponents of IOK critiqued secular thinkers for having corrupted human understanding of the world, bringing about widespread confusion in the minds of Muslims and destruction to the world. Muslims should therefore place all existing branches of knowledge under scrutiny and reconstruct the worldly sciences within the rubric of the Islamic worldview, concepts, and methodologies. Al-Attas wrote:

> [T]he greatest challenge that has surreptitiously arisen in our age is the challenge of knowledge as conceived and disseminated throughout the world by Western civilization; knowledge whose nature has become problematic because it has lost it true purpose due to being unjustly conceived, and has thus brought about chaos in man's life instead of, and rather than, peace and justice; knowledge that pretends to be real but which is productive of confusion and scepticism, which has elevated doubt and conjecture to the "scientific" rank in methodology; knowledge which has, for the first time in history, brought chaos to the Three Kingdoms of Nature; the animal, vegetal and mineral.[3]

It follows then that the appeal of the da'wah movement lay not only in its vision of a new world that would be inundated with Islam but also in the idea that everyone, regardless of social background, class, or status, can play a part in the movement in the pursuit of a new Islamic order. The da'wah movement was heterogeneous, consisting of different groups that have their own ideologies. Among these groups were the millenarian Sufi Darul Arqam, the modernist-globalist Islamic Representative Council (IRC, later known as Jemaah Islah Malaysia) and ABIM, the quietist-devotional-focused Tablighi Jamaat (or Jemaah Tabligh), and the politically oriented PAS, among many others. One thread that bound the disparate ideologies of the groups was the emphasis on *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), toward achieving one shared aim: the victory of Islam over all other systems of thought and ways of life. The onus was upon each and every Islamic activist to realize that vision.[4]

The da'wah movement stretched its tentacles into the urban areas of Malaysia. Other than in rural Kelantan, where the reformist ulama and their students have

had a grasp on the minds of ordinary Muslims for many generations, the da'wah movement had limited success in other rural areas of Malaysia until the advent of a highly assertive state Islamization in the mid-1980s.[5] The core emphasis of the da'wah movement was on the reformation of the individual, and this could be achieved through closed discussions in small gatherings known as *usrah* (Arabic for "family") and halaqah. During these sessions, the ideology of each and every group was considered. Da'wah groups also developed and maintained a protective Islamic economy of their own in a response to the forces of capitalism. They established schools, clinics, hospitals, markets, and other businesses that attended to the needs of their members and other Muslims. Most Islamic activists, however, worked in mainstream organizations, colleges, universities, and governmental offices and donated part of their income to the movement. They were beneficiaries of NEP, endowed with scholarships to fund their studies abroad at Western universities, namely in Britain, the United States, Japan, and the Arab world. Upon their return to Malaysia, these students used their salaried jobs as platforms to propagate Islam and to recruit more members into missionary work.[6] The rapid spread of the da'wah movement in Malaysia could be largely attributed to its organizational strength and systemized strategies. Islamic activists would recruit, first of all, members of their immediate and extended families. Following that, they rooted themselves deep into their neighborhoods, participating in local organizations and rising in their occupations to win the trust of the people around them through demonstrative means. By offering assistance and displaying good character as well as fine mannerisms, they attracted families, friends, colleagues, and neighbors to become members of their cells. The membership of the da'wah movement multiplied in size as a result of this multifaceted approach to recruitment. The long-term aspiration was to suffuse Islamic values into as many domains of life and eventually the country as a whole toward the formation of an Islamized nation. This was a vision inspired by and in parallel with Islamic movements and thinkers in Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia.[7]

The ideology and organization of the da'wah movement was further cemented by the work of charismatic and committed leaders. These leaders maintained compliance through a hierarchical structure that demanded strict obedience from its followers. ABIM, for example, underwent a boost in public support upon the advent of Anwar Ibrahim as its second president, replacing the more austere Razali Nawawi. Anwar was born in 1947 in Penang from a lower middle-class family that was pro-UMNO. His towering personality and fiery speeches earned him the position as chairman of the University of Malaya Malay Language Society, the *Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia* (PKPIM, or National Muslim Students' Association of Malaysia), and the Malaysian Youth Council during his undergraduate years. Anwar, together

with several former university students, religious teachers, and professionals, founded ABIM in 1971. Three years later, Anwar took over the chairmanship of ABIM from Razali Nawawi and made the organization the avant-garde of da'wah in Malaysia. Under Anwar's leadership, ABIM rallied for the cause of the poor and the disenfranchised and called for reforms of the secularized and un-Islamic political system. ABIM campaigned for the Islamization of knowledge in all mainstream schools and encouraged the Muslim youth to relive the Islamic identity in the quest to build a model Muslim nation. ABIM abjured racial politics promoted by UMNO, which the organization deemed as contrary to the universal message of Islam and the cause of an identity crisis among the Muslim youth.[8] Anwar's revolutionary predisposition earned him a twenty-month detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in 1974. Other ABIM members such as Ustaz Fadzil Noor (1939–2002) were fired from their jobs as lecturers for reasons of participation in opposition politics.[9] ABIM gained more followership because of its leaders' principled stances, with branches in almost every state in Malaysia established by the beginning of the 1980s. Its student recruitment arm, PKPIM, established a firm hold on almost all public university campuses. Its global reputation and appeal among Malaysian students overseas widened significantly upon Anwar's arrest and Fadzil Noor's firing. The long shadow that Anwar cast on ABIM and on the dakwah movement in Southeast Asia has persisted until now, making him comparable to the Algerian Muslim democrat and movement activist, Rashid Ghannouchi, who shaped the course of Islamic activism in the Arab world.[10]

Ashaari Mohammad (1937–2010) was another enigmatic leader who commanded the respect of a large segment of the Muslim masses during the height of the da'wah movement in Malaysia. Having received a religious education at local madrasahs, Ashaari worked as a teacher in a government school in Selangor in the mid-1950s. There, he was inducted into a Sufi group based in Singapore—the Aurad Muhammadiah—led by the messianic religious guide, Syaikh Taha Suhaimi.[11] The encounter between the two men signified a shift in Ashaari's life and career. He established a branch of the tariqah in Malaysia before formalizing his own brotherhood. Proclaiming himself as belonging to Bani Tamim, an Arab tribe of the Al-Mahdi who would emerge during the end of times, Ashaari's ideological message was simple yet persuasive: total obedience to the murshid; leading a disciplined and industrious life; projecting the Islamic identity through wearing of turbans, *niqab* (face veils), as well as green and black robes; engaging in regular devotional acts and *zikr* (remembrance of God); establishing faith-based communes and institutions that would keep the Muslims independent from capitalism; and practicing polygamy to resolve the problems of promiscuity and to expand the proportion of Muslims in Malaysia.

At the zenith of his movement, Ashaari removed all contending forces in Darul Arqam who questioned his authority and mustered the loyalty of hundreds of thousands of followers, all of whom referred to him with the respectful epithet, *Abuya* (Revered One).[12]

Finally, the da'wah movement in Malaysia grew through networks that reached into the rest of Southeast Asia and the world. Islamic networks were activitist communities that served as channels by which ideas, resources, and other forms of support were shared and disseminated seamlessly, thereby aiding the growth of Muslim missionary work in a particular locality.[13] The Tablighi Jamaat, as an illustrative case in point, was linked to a group of Muslim missionaries in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Their followers were found globally in about 150 countries. In every country, a *markaz* (center, usually a mosque) was established as a meeting point. Members of the tablighi jamaat would undertake missionary trips in Malaysia and overseas where they would meet other members of the movement and invite Muslims to the mosque. Like the Darul Arqam, the Tablighi Jamaat was apolitical and focused primarily on spiritual and character reformation. Because the group shunned any discussions regarding fiqh and the finer details of Islamic theology and turned instead to encouraging Muslims to lead a virtuous life while being committed to bringing as many people to mosques, it was able to attract Muslims and also non-Muslims who longed for a retreat from modern life. [14]

ABIM and IRC, in turn, had networks that stretched into the Arab world, Europe, North America, and Australia. These groups regularly sent their members for meetings and conferences organized by transnational associations such as the International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation (IIFSO), World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) based in the United States. ABIM and IRC regarded the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood) as their model. Established in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan Al-Banna, the Ikhwanul Muslimin called for reclaiming the Islamic spirit and the legacies of the Islamic civilization. The movement was globalist in its objective.[15] Another transnational movement that shaped ABIM and IRC's activities and ideology was the Jamaati Islami in Pakistan, led by Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi (1903–1979). As for the Darul Arqam, it was linked to a tariqah that was originally founded in Morocco. Ashaari Mohammad enlivened the networked nature of the tariqas by creating offshoots of his brotherhood across Southeast Asia, the Arab world, China, Uzbekistan, Australia, and the United States. At the peak of its popularity, Darul Arqam owned a host of businesses dealing with groceries, poultry, traditional Islamic fashionwear, educational books, and other media items. Business networks were avenues to recruit potential members and sympathizers to the movement.[16]

Even though the da'wah movement had strong connections globally, they were, above all, Malay-centered. Malayness and the penchant for Malay supremacy overrode most of its ends and structured the means by which Islam was propagated. Hussin Mutalib, in his study of da'wah movement in the 1980s, observes that Islamic activists leaned heavily toward ethnic-based programs and activities, lending credence to the Malay-triumphalist Islam that UMNO was promoting. Evidences of this can be discerned from the dearth of non-Malay leadership in most Islamic organizations, their overt pronouncements regarding Malay special rights, and outreach events that were generally concerned with making Malays more Islamic rather than presenting the universality of Islam to non-Muslims.[17] In other words, the da'wah movement in Malaysia shared many striking affinities with UMNO's ideology of a Malay-first Malaysia. The only difference, at least during the early years of Mahathir's reign, was that Islamic activists were unapologetic in pressuring the state and indeed all Malaysians to shed their secular garb. Islamic activists were blatant about establishing global Islamic solidarity that transcended nation-states while asserting ketuanan Melayu in their home ground. The da'wah movement was bent on Islamizing the nation, not realizing that the government would soon turn the tables by co-opting its leaders and then systematically nationalize all forms of Islamic activism.

Mahathir's government was faced with a variety of religious revivalisms other than having to contend with a resurgent Islam. The 1980s was an age of revitalization of major world religions—Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It was a time dubbed by some scholars as an epoch of the "revenge of God," "fundamentalist revolt," and "desecularization of the world." A few factors may account for this return to faith and piety. The failure of secular regimes and the inefficacy of secular ideologies in providing solutions to the many problems faced by global societies was one paramount cause. Capitalism, socialism, communism, Third-Worldism, and the like have left in their wake a spiritual void, a moral vacuum, and a deep sense of disillusionment about humankind's ability to solve their own intractable challenges. Rapid improvements in communication and transport amplified the rapid spread of religious ideas. Cassette tapes, Walkmans, and video home systems functioned not only as technologies of entertainment but as tools of disenchantment about all things secular.[18]

The revival of one world religion triggered a chain reaction, encouraging other religions to follow suit, giving rise to a race between faiths to win the hearts and souls of the perplexed and former skeptics. The defenders of God were repossessing their place in the modern world, and they were doing it with passion, fire, and fury.[19] In Malaysia, this revolt against modernity and the abrupt turn to spirituality was evinced in the sharp increase in the number of Christian churches as well as Buddhist and Hindu temples. Charismatic Christianity from

the United States was also staking its place in the country. In some instances, pastors had fierce showdowns with charismatic Christians that led to the latter's expulsion from churches. The dissenters established splinter churches that had a wider appeal among the urban youth who were in search of a rationalized form of piety.[20] Even though many Taoists and Buddhists were won over by Christian charismatic movements in Malaysia, attendance at events such as Vesak Day saw a discernible increase in the 1980s. Like never before, Buddhist classes were taught in English to cater to Anglophone youths and working professionals who found instruction in Chinese dialects difficult to follow. Buddhists, like other non-Muslims in Malaysia, were very much affected by the wave of Malay-triumphalist Islam that was gaining prominence by the day. The only way to ensure their continued relevance was to refashion their faiths and to adapt strategically in an increasingly Islamized environment.[21]

Not particularly favored by a segment of UMNO leadership who were Tunku's supporters and cognizant of non-Malay reservations about his stewardship, Mahathir was caught between a rock and a hard place. He saw how Hussein Onn struggled in vain to keep the da'wah movement in check and was equally mindful that Islamic resurgence was impacting the Muslims in Southeast Asia in ways that was not easily contained. In campuses, schools, offices, markets, and homes, Malays were exposed to Islamic activism and were becoming da'wah activists (*masuk jadi dakwah*) in droves. Left with few options, Mahathir made the milestone decision of siding with Islamic resurgents. He gave the best among them top party positions and secured lucrative jobs for them in government agencies, effectively turning the Malaysian regime into a "da'wah state." Mahathir's master stroke enhanced the UMNO's power over the public and private lives of Muslims, while disrupting PAS and ABIM's mounting influence among Malays and in the corridors of power in the wider Muslim world. Riding on the wave of the da'wah movement, Mahathir was able to pursue his dream of a developed Malaysia by harnessing the commitment, passions, and industriousness of Islamic activists. In his two decades as prime minister (1981–2003), Mahathir made state Islamization the shared agenda of Islamic activists. He aligned their missionizing aims with his developmentalist objectives. He capitalized and nationalized their activities, networks, and resources to build an alternative capitalist modernity.[22]

Mahathir's first step in enclosing the da'wah movement was to declare UMNO as the biggest Islamic party with grassroots activist credentials. UMNO was the leading advocate of Islamization. Toward that end, he launched the *Dasar Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam* (Inculcation of Islamic Values Policy) in 1982. Islamic values were instilled in all ministries, and government organs were centered on promoting incorruptibility, accountability, and efficiency while being technologically and scientifically driven. UMNO did not only transform the

government into a da'wah state, it was also a defender of Sunni Islam. For this reason, Mahathir distanced his government from Iran since the country was aggressive in spreading Shi'ite Islam throughout the Muslim world following the Islamic revolution in 1979. For Mahathir, Malay Muslims should remain ideologically Sunni and yet could work together with the Shi'ites. Religious sectarianism, according to Mahathir, has brought about chaos and stunted development in many Muslim countries.[23]

In making such a brazen commitment to da'wah, UMNO under Mahathir's lead broke PAS's reputation of being the only Islamic party in Malaysia. The PAS trump card over UMNO was its close relationship with ABIM. It was normal for ABIM members who were predisposed to politics to eventually join PAS given the shared aims that the two entities had in regard to the creation of an Islamic state in Malaysia. Nearing the 1982 general elections, rumor had it that PAS leaders had approached Anwar Ibrahim to be one of the party's candidates. The prospect of a PAS victory in many Malaysian states was looming on the horizon with Anwar's entry into the party. Mahathir made the contrived move of inviting Anwar into UMNO instead through the mediation of the famed Palestinian-American scholar, Ismail Al-Faruqi (1921–1986). PAS was denied an ace in their sleeve. Anwar's entry into UMNO brought a major victory for the party during the elections. His swift ascent in ministerial positions and the co-optation of many Islamic activists into governmental organs swung the da'wah movement to UMNO's advantage.[24]

Mahathir and Anwar shared some commonalities that made them a formidable duo in the project of Islamizing Malaysia. Both hailed from non-aristocratic backgrounds, had worked their way up through hard work, and were perceptive of the anxieties of ordinary Malaysians. Both were radical activists before their entry into politics. Mahathir was a fierce critic of the government during Tunku's term, and Anwar walked the same path during Hussein Onn's premiership. They both understood the mental frames of radicals in Malaysia and had the know-how in shifting the flow of a fast-moving and unbridled Islamization. Both commanded a huge following in Malaysia. Mahathir was a prince among Malay nationalists, and Anwar was an icon among the youth both in Malaysia and overseas. Both men also climbed very quickly within the ministerial ranks. Merely two years after his return to politics in 1972, Mahathir was appointed the minister of education before being handpicked by Hussein Onn as deputy prime minister. Similarly, Anwar joined as the leader of UMNO Youth and was soon enough appointed in a few important portfolios—the minister of culture, finance, and deputy prime minister. The pact between these two men, unimaginable to both Islamic activists and Malay nationalists in the 1980s, sealed the destiny of a once-secularized Malaysia. The country was headed toward full-blown Islamization

with two powerful forces—the da'wah state and Islamic organizations on the ground—infusing Islam in the lives of all Malaysians.[25]

Anwar's rise in UMNO also meant the statization of Islamic activism. With Anwar as one of the principal drivers of Islamization programs and providing Malaysian government with the Islamic stamp it needed to tilt the balance of global resurgence to its advantage, Islamic organizations had to reconfigure their missionary work to remain relevant. ABIM directed its resources toward supporting the government's policies but maintained its position as an independent organization committed to reforming the youth. The new president of ABIM, Siddiq Fadhil (1982–1991), emphasized that ABIM should not be a recruiting ground for politics, be it for the incumbent or opposition parties. ABIM should expand its activities to attract non-Muslims, though the organization's primary concentration was to bring the Malays closer to Islam.[26]

ABIM's partnership with the UMNO government broadened the reach of other Islamic organizations, particularly among activists who wanted the da'wah movement to remain independent from governmental intervention. Darul Arqam stepped up its activities in the 1980s, establishing a host of businesses to fund its missionary work. The youth played major roles in Darul Arqam's bid to champion an ethical approach to development and capitalism. By 1988, almost half of Darul Arqam members were employed by the movement itself and the number swelled through the years to a point where most members were employees of the organization. Through mega exhibitions held in different states in Malaysia, Darul Arqam showcased its budding enterprises and, at the same time, won over more members and sympathizers. These exhibitions were usually attended by thousands, as seen in the ones organized in a few states between 1988 and 1990 with the theme of "Islam Is the Way of Life."[27]

Other Islamic groups such as the IRC and Jemaah Tabligh also saw an increase in followership as Islamic consciousness in Malaysia saw an effervescence throughout the 1990s. Originally based in the United Kingdom and the United States with branches in Malaysia, the IRC was formally registered in July 1990 as the Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM, or Congregation of Islamic Reform). The formalization of the movement and change of name reflected the organization's changing priority. While maintaining a transnational outlook, JIM was devoted to islah through *tarbiyyah* (education) of all strata of society and eventually the whole country. JIM avowedly stated that its long-term aim was to reinstate the shari'a in Malaysia. While its mainstay was total Islamization, JIM defended human rights and backed social justice causes affecting Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It served as a check to the excesses of power by the state and its organs during the Reformasi period in 1998.[28]

In pursuit of being the leading driver of Islamization, the Malaysian government establishment Islamic institutions throughout the country encompassing education, economy, laws, science, and technology as well as societal affairs. In July 1983, the *Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad* (BIMB) was launched, blazing the trail for the growth of Islamic banking and finance in Malaysia that offered interest-free loans and other financial schemes that departed from the practices of conventional banks. The Islamic Economic Development Fund and *Syarikat Takaful Malaysia* (Malaysia Insurance Cooperative) were also created in the late 1980s to oversee the operations of Islamic banks and insurance policies. Within less than a decade after the BIMB's establishment, conventional banks too saw the lucrativeness of Islamic banking and began offering shari'a-compliant loans and insurance. In the ensuing decades, Malaysia emerged as a leading global center of Islamic finance.[29] These banks helped to finance the construction of grand mosques that doubled in number under Mahathir's prime ministership.

By 1990, Kuala Lumpur alone had seventy mosques and the number of suraus almost tripled that number. Every state in Malaysia was also provided with massive funding to build majestic mosques, namely, the Sabah State Mosque, the Pahang State Mosque, and the Federal Territory of Labuan Mosque, among others. These mosques were colossal in size, replete with magnificent designs and crowned by imposing domes. They reflected the state's keen promotion of Islam and the coming-into-being of Malaysia as an Islamic nation that was rapidly shedding its colonial and secular heritage. The construction of hundreds of new mosques and prayer spaces was also the government's way of surpassing PAS in the Islamization race. UMNO imams and offices were employed in these institutions to influence public opinion about the government through *khutbahs* (sermons) and religious classes.[30]

The mushrooming of Islamic banks came together with the inauguration of Islamic universities, the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) being a pioneering one in that genre. Muslim scholars conceptualized the idea of Islamic universities integrating Islamic and worldly sciences during the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Jeddah, Makkah, in 1977. With the assistance of several Muslim states and major financial institutions, two international Islamic universities were eventually founded in Pakistan (1980) and Malaysia (1983). The IIUM aspired to be the nucleus for scholars from across the world to pursue the vision of the Islamization of knowledge and revive the spirit of ijtihad. Unlike all other Islamic studies faculties in Malaysia taught in Malay and Arabic, Islamic studies at IIUM were taught in English and Arabic. Its faculty staff and students hailed from more than a hundred countries.[31] Four years after the founding of IIUM, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (ISTAC) was formed. Launched by Anwar Ibrahim, the minister of education, and chaired

by Syed Naquib Al-Attas, the institute offered courses on Islamic thought, philosophy, and science at the postgraduate level. Islamic studies faculties at other Malaysian universities received more support from the government during this time, and many states began to establish their own local Islamic colleges. The *Kolej Ugama Sultan Zainal Abidin* (Islamic College of Sultan Zainal Abidin, KUSZA [1983]), *Kolej Islam Melaka* (Islamic College of Melaka, KIM [1994]), and *Kolej Islam Pahang* (Islamic College of Pahang, KIP [1996]) were among many other Islamic colleges. In some mainstream universities, non-Muslim students were mandated to take courses on subjects related to Islam. A case in point was the *Institut Teknologi MARA* (MARA Institute of Technology, ITM), which required non-Muslim students to pass six courses on Islamic studies as part of its graduation requirements.[32]

Other pre-tertiary institutions underwent changes in their curriculum in line with state Islamization policies. The *Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah* (New Primary Schools Curriculum, or KBSR) and *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (Integrated Secondary School Curriculum, or KBSM) introduced in 1983 included the teaching of Islam as a non-examinable subject. More subjects were included in the ensuing years covering Islamic jurisprudence, ethics, Arabic language, Qur'anic readings, and Jawi. Concomitantly, Islamic teachers training colleges were created to train teachers for the teaching of Islam in national schools. Making Islamic studies an essential subject in national schools elicited some uneasiness among non-Muslim parents. The Malaysian government's solution to this tension was to present Islam in national schools classes not as a missionizing faith but part of the culture, heritage, and values of the nation that all Malaysians could affiliate themselves with.[33]

Non-Muslims' anxieties over triumphalist Islamization upon Anwar's entry into the government heightened and were expressed in varying ways. For various reasons—the unhappiness regarding the intrusiveness of the da'wah state among them—many non-Muslim Chinese and Indians migrated to Singapore, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other Western countries in large numbers after the late 1980s, leading to a brain drain of educated working professionals and business people. Studies on migration to Australia showed that the second largest group of immigrants in the 1980s were Chinese and Indian Malaysians. Along with declining birth rates, the proportion of non-Muslims declined from 50 percent of the total population in 1957 to 43 percent in 1990. By the year 2000, only 26 percent of the Malaysian population were Chinese.[34]

Those who chose to stay in Malaysia aired out their concerns through dialogues with politicians and state agencies. The Malaysian Consultative for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) (also known as the Malaysia Religions' Consultation Council) was created in 1983 toward that end. The

MCCBCHS organized seminars and conferences to address non-Muslim fears in regard to government policies regarding spaces for religious activities, evangelical activities, daily tensions, as well as misunderstanding between Muslims and non-Muslims, and conversion from Islam and was outspoken against the progressive implementation of shari'a laws in the country by launching a nation-wide protest in 1990.[35] Finally, non-Muslims mobilized behind political parties such DAP, MCA, and MIC and civil society organizations to effect change in the treatment of non-Muslims. That said, most non-Muslims were guarded in highlighting their displeasure at the changing religious landscape. Their pragmatic and live-and-let-live approach could be attributed to the lessons learned from the 1969 riots and also the realization that non-Muslims lacked the political base to influence policies. One other reason for this pragmatic approach was that non-Muslims, especially the Chinese, lived in general harmony with the Muslims in Malaysia. This was in stark contrast with the Chinese in Indonesia, who had to undergo bouts of violence meted against them. In other words, triumphalist Islamization in Malaysia might have been all-encompassing in scope and accelerating in pace, but it did not compromise the overall safety of non-Muslims. The rule of law prevailed, and all forms of religious extremism were suppressed.[36]

Under Anwar's supervision, the powers and scope of existing government-linked Islamic institutions and committees were extended. The religious affairs department in the prime minister's office saw a jump of 600 staff in 1987 since its creation two decades earlier. The *Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji* (LUTH, or Pilgrims' Management Fund Board) received more funding and technical support and, as a result, was able to open eighty-six branches in all parts of Malaysia. By 1991, its assets had grown to USD 106.1 million dollars. Through LUTH, the government could monitor pilgrims from Malaysia and derail radical networks from Iran and other countries that flowed through the hajj routes. LUTH also financed Islamic banks and restoration of *waqf* properties.[37]

Anwar's most distinct contribution to the Islamization process was to induct Islamic activists into the ministries, who, in turn, pushed for the widening of the extent of the shari'a.[38] These Islamic activists sat on high-level committees, among which were *Lembaga Bersama Penyelarasan Kegiatan Islam Malaysia* (Joint Committee on Management and Implementation of Islamic Activities Malaysia), *Badan Perundingan Islam* (Islamic Consultation Board), *Majlis Syura* (Consultative Council), and *Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Malaysia* (National Council for Islamic Affairs). In 1988, Article 121(1A) was introduced in the constitution such that "civil courts shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any matter within the jurisdiction of the syariah courts." Predictably, PAS leadership felt imperiled by the pace of these legal changes. In 1993, the Kelantan state legislature under PAS control passed a hudud enactment

bill. During the parliamentary debates over the bill, Haji Mohamad bin Sabu (aka Mat Sabu), a parliamentarian from PAS, commented that the government was painting a negative image of hudud, which, if studied carefully, "is a law that provides justice for all, but the previous statement (by Prime Minister Mahathir) creates anxieties among Malays and also among non-Muslims."[39] The federal government rejected the bill on the basis that many of the laws in place were already in line with the shari'a and that the position of non-Muslims in the country would be jeopardized should the bill be implemented. Outside the parliamentary hall, other Muslim civil society activists and scholars joined in the chorus to criticize the hudud as ill-suited for a multi-religious Malaysia.[40]

Even though no state in Malaysia adopted the hudud as part of its legal framework, shari'a courts and Islamic enforcement agencies at both the state and federal levels were provided with more powers to regulate the piety and faith of ordinary Muslims. Shari'a courts in various states enacted a long list of new offenses, covering immoral conduct, blasphemy, regulation of halal products, theft, deviant teachings, on top of statutes that

> prohibit insulting or bringing into contempt the religion of Islam or Islamic laws, insulting or deriding the verses of Qur'an and hadith, teaching Islamic Islam without authorization, failing to perform obligatory Friday congregational prayer, selling food for immediate consumption or eating publicly during the month of Ramadan, wilfully failing to pay zakat, gambling and consuming intoxicating drink.[41]

The powers that these courts wielded extended with support from Islamic activists who entered into much of the state's bureaucracies and who used their organizations to pressure state agencies to enforce Islamic norms upon society.

This was clearly seen in the work of JAWI (*Jabatan Agama Wilayah Persekutuan*, or Federal Territories Religious Department), JAIS (Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor, or Selangor Islamic Religious Department), and JAKIM. JAWI and JAIS officers have detained Muslims over deviant teachings, indecent behavior, *zina* (adultery), *khalwat* (close proximity between unmarried couples suspected of engaging in immoral acts), and not observing the fast during Ramadan and have raided places that conducted activities that contravened Islamic laws. Non-Muslims who were suspected of proselytizing Muslims or organizing activities seen as threatening the faith of Muslims were also questioned and had their religious places and events searched. By the 1980s, court cases pertaining to adultery committed by Muslims were heard daily. The decade that followed saw a marked increase in new enactments, laws, raids, and programs that dealt with the indecent behavior and the imposition of heavier sentences for such crimes.[42]

These cases were often widely publicized in the local media, prompting Islamic activists to intensify their activities to educate the youth regarding Islamic laws, ethics, and morality. This everyday implementation of Islamic justice, as we have seen earlier, could be traced back to the period of kerajaan Islamization where immorality was deemed a breach of state laws. Reviving the dominant practices of the precolonial era, in March 1994, the Pusat Islam proposed that anyone found committing khalwat, zina, and violence toward their wives should be caned.[43] From 1982 to 1997, the states of Pahang, Perak, Melaka, Sabah, and Terengganu introduced heavier sentences for the crime of apostasy and insulting Islam, ranging from fines amounting to 3,000 ringgit to imprisonment not exceeding two years or both. The fatwas of muftis in these states and others that followed their lead were binding on all Muslims residing therein.[44]

This period of Islamic revivalism stimulated the inclination toward "halalization." Malaysian Muslims in Malaysia were ever-more conscious about everything they bought and consumed, be it food, clothing, cosmetics, music, health products, housing locations, and even luxury merchandise such as cars. The main concern was purity, as stipulated by the shari'a. The Islamized masses feared contamination and shunned all things *haram* (impermissible), hence, only products that were sold by Muslims or that were certified by Islamic agencies were sought. The Malaysian government fed and rode on this halalization trend. In 1994, JAKIM began issuing halal certificates for budding businesses owned or managed by non-Muslims selling Islamic products and foodstuffs. Four years later, a company by the name Ilham Daya was appointed by the government to inspect and ensure compliance to JAKIM halal standards. Many of these halal-certified products were exported to European countries where the Muslim markets were expanding. By the eve of the twentieth century, Malaysia had developed the reputation of being a prime exporter of halal products throughout the world. Indonesia, including Singapore, where Muslims have been minorities, was among the other Southeast Asian countries that joined in the competition for recognition as global halal hubs and exporters.[45]

Indeed, the halalization trend was not a quintessentially Muslim phenomenon. Seeing the economic potential of the halal industry, many non-Muslim–owned multinational companies (MNCs) and other small and medium enterprises contributed to the rapid expansion of the halal industry. Food chains like A&W, McDonalds, KFC, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Kenny Rogers, Dunkin' Donuts, Auntie Anne's, and Swensons applied successfully for halal certification in the late 1980s and witnessed a substantial increase in sales and in the number of new outlets soon after. Muslims in Malaysia were big eaters as they were big spenders in such food chains, citing "cleanliness," "efficiency," "taste," and "location" as key reasons why they preferred dining in those places rather than in

local centers and restaurants. These food chains were often strategically located in local and mega-malls where other halal or Muslim products were sold and where prayer places were provided specifically for Muslim shoppers. The developers and owners of these shopping centers, mega-malls, and fast food franchises were mostly non-Muslim Chinese business magnates.[46]

Non-Muslim record labels such as Warner Music and EMI delved deeply into the thriving Islamic music industry, investing millions of Malaysian dollars in the *nasyid* (Islamic a capella) fad. Among the Malaysian nasyid groups that enjoyed global fame were Raihan and Huda. Formed in 1997 and selling over a million copies of their albums both in Malaysia and overseas, Raihan was awarded several music awards through the years. A youth sensation across Southeast Asia, their songs were translated into several languages, and the group performed in the United States, Europe, East Asia, and Australia. Raihan inspired the blossoming of dozens of nasyid boy bands in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia that emerged as formidable competitors to non–faith-based pop music. At some point, nasyid and mainstream pop artists collaborated and a syncretized form of musical genre that fused Islamic messages with reggae, hip-hop, and rock rhythms emerged.[47] Developments in the local Malaysian music industry provided the catalyst for non-Muslim business people to make forays into Islamic tourism, pious fashion, and the Islamic film industry. To ensure the stable growth of their business start-ups, Muslim entrepreneurs actually searched for non-Muslim partners with an eye on tapping their expansive networks.[48] When it came to making money, Islamic resurgence in Malaysia was every creative entrepreneur's gold mine and business venture, whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims. Non-Muslim business people worked hand in hand with their Muslim partners to transform Malay-triumphalist Islam into a commercial enterprise. Big money married unlikely partners.

Malaysia under Mahathir and Anwar's Islamization policies was also a terrain of boycotts, banning, and demonstrations against any agencies or forces seen as working against Islam and Muslims. In November 1986, Islamic organizations demonstrated against the visit of Israeli President, Chaim Herzog, to Singapore. For months on end, Muslim activists as well as statesmen from Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia denounced the Singapore government for their lack of sensitivity toward neighboring Muslim countries that had repeatedly refused to establish any diplomatic ties with Israel due to its unjust treatment of Palestinians.[49] In the same year, ABIM collaborated with *Aliran Kesedaran Negara* (Aliran), the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), and the Bar Council to form the "Movement for Freedom and Justice" as a reaction against the Malaysian amendment of the Official Secrets Act (OSA). Such protest cycles were common in Malaysia despite repeated government crackdowns, the most iconic being

Operation Lalang, which saw the arrest of 119 politicians, intellectuals, media reporters, and social activists.[50] Feminist and other women's organizations also contributed to the protest movement by expressing their unhappiness over long-standing issues of marital abuse, gender inequality in the workplace, and sexist interpretations of Islam. The Sisters in Islam (SIS), Helwa ABIM, Wanita JIM, and Dewan Muslimat PAS were among the most prominent women's organizations that railed against masculinist tendencies in Malaysian Islam.[51]

By the 1990s, Muslim politicians were poised to make public declarations that the country was already an Islamic state that would share with the world its unique model and its commitment in assisting Muslims outside Malaysia to eventually arrive at the same level of progress. The culmination of the many statements made regarding Malaysia as a model Islamic state was during the UMNO General Assembly held on September 5, 1997. Mahathir remarked that Muslim countries were equivocal about Malaysia's success as an exemplary Muslim country. The reason why Malaysia was looked up to was because of

> its practice of moderation in Islam. Muslims in Malaysia have successfully governed a multi-racial and multi-religious populace. They, Muslims elsewhere, are convinced that Islamic laws are commendably implemented because it has clearly brought that peace and progress to our country and they regard Malaysia as an Islamic state as we have formally recognized. . . . And because of this, Malaysia is prosperous and strong and able to assist the oppressed and persecuted such as the Bosnians, the Palestinians, Somalians and so forth.[52]

As to the last point, the Malaysian government worked hand in hand with grassroots bodies to agitate and assist Muslims globally experiencing oppression. A noted case in point was during the Serbian invasion and massacre of Bosnian Muslims in 1992. The government sent peacekeeping troops to Bosnia, closed the Yugoslav embassy, permitted public demonstrations to raise international awareness and responses from Muslim globally, and spent millions to assist Bosnian refugees to start life anew in Malaysia. Within the larger Muslim world, Malaysia was at the forefront of the efforts to defend their brethren, even to the extent of defying United Nations arms sanctions on Bosnia.[53]

Non-Muslims increasingly felt the impact of Malay-triumphalist Islam to the extent that the matter was raised in parliament on many occasions. A member of Gerakan, Lim Heng Tee, for example, mentioned: "from the feedback I have received, the mere mention of the word 'Islam' would bring about uneasiness in the minds of non-Muslims." Heng Tee suggested that the government incorporate universal principles from other religions as well in its attempt to inculcate good

values in society and in state institutions.[54] The parliamentarian's observations were not far off the mark. Islamic organizations expanded in followership and influence so much that any visitor to Kuala Lumpur in the 1990s would encounter a proliferation of Islamic magazines, comics, and paraphernalia; big signboards and posters advertising Islamic products and events; Islamic banks; and other visible signs of Islam's strong presence.

To circumvent this disquiet among non-Muslims, in 1991 Mahathir launched "Vision 2020," a roadmap to transform Malaysia into an inclusive, highly industrialized and knowledge-driven nation. It was vision that included the realization of a *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Race) where all races and religions would identify themselves as belonging to a unified community with common aims, aspirations, ambitions, and values. On one level, Vision 2020 was a departure from the NEP that has been in operation since 1971. Mahathir, however, clarified that Malay interests came first and had the foremost attention of the ruling government. He called upon the Malays to work toward becoming *Melayu Baru* (New Malays), urging them to be competitive and eventually be on par with other communities in all areas of life. Affirmative policies were here to stay and in forging a new nation that moved slowly beyond past old differences, Mahathir was aware of the backlash of a mounting triumphalist Islamization if he questioned one of its pillars: Malay rights.[55]

Muslims too were affected by the heavy hand of the da'wah state, as proscriptions and, sometimes, violent actions, were meted out against a segment seen by the government to be transgressing the brand of Islam it deemed the established orthopraxy. JAKIM listed more than 125 groups and their ideologies that were considered as deviant and outside the fold of Sunni Islam in Malaysia. These groups included mystical and invulnerability cults, worshipers of keramats, persons who claimed divinity or to be messengers of God, groups or personalities that denied the sanctity of the Al-Qur'an and the Hadith, extremist factions, as well as anyone associated with Shi'ism.[56] JAKIM worked alongside other government-linked agencies such as the Institut *Kefahaman Islam Malaysia* (IKIM, or Institute of Islamic Understanding of Malaysia), a think-tank formed in 1992. IKIM ran its own radio station, a publishing arm, and funded research projects as well as meetings among scholars and thinkers. Its overriding purpose was to disseminate the idea of a cosmopolitan, universal, and urbane Islam to non-Muslims and to raise public consciousness regarding any forms of ideologies that ran contrary to Sunni thought.[57]

The most highly publicized proscriptions of what the state deemed as extremist and deviant groups were the followers of Ibrahim Mahmud, the Al-Maunah and Darul Arqam. Ibrahim Mahmud (nicknamed Ibrahim Libya) was a member of PAS whose hard-line religious views and wide followership had raised

the concerns of the state's religious authorities. He was banned from teaching Islam and, in reaction to this, formed a radical group known as the *Kumpulan Revolusi Islam Ibrahim Libya* (Ibrahim Libya Islamic Revolution Group) in Kedah. The group was soon enough declared as deviant by the government. On November 19, 1985, police officers were sent to the group's compound, only to be met with strong resistance by his followers. The conflict ended with eighteen people killed and scores of others injured; 166 members of Ibrahim's revolutionary group were arrested under the ISA.[58]

The Darul Arqam movement was outlawed because of the organization threatening the security and faith of Muslims in Malaysia. By 1990, Darul Arqam had established close to forty-eight communes around Malaysia, with the largest in Sungei Pencala, Selangor. These communities were mini-states of their own and provided all necessary amenities, infrastructure, and services that a Muslim needed to experience what it felt like to live in an Islamic state. Once popular even among governmental employees and politicians, the movement was declared illegal in August 1994 due to Ashaari Muhammad's declaration that he was the promised messiah and that his movement would soon establish an Islamic government in Malaysia. Reports of a military unit in Thailand linked to the Darul Arqam alarmed the Malaysian government. Ashaari and his followers were put behind bars for two years and upon their release opened the Rufaqa Corporation, which continued the work of preaching Islam through businesses and welfare activities.[59]

In July 2000, Malaysian security forces arrested another militant group, the *Persaudaraan Ilmu Dalam Al-Ma'unah* (Brotherhood of Al-Ma'unah Inner Power, or simply, "Al-Ma'unah"). What began as a pugilistic collective that prescribed traditional medicines to develop an invulnerability among its followers developed into a fighting force that called for the establishment of an Islamic state through violence. Spearheaded by Mohd Amin bin Mohd Razali, a former corporal in the Malaysian army, the group disguised themselves as army officers and stole firearms and ammunition from the Malaysian Army Reserve Camp in Perak. The standoff between Malaysian security forces and Al-Ma'unah ended with the killing of two members of the militant group and the arrest of nineteen others. Amin and two others were hanged for the murder of two police officers. Sixteen other militants were sentenced to life imprisonment.[60]

Violent radicalism continued to influence a minority of the Malaysian Muslim community in the ensuing decades as they came into contact with militant movements in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. The advent of new communication technologies and the ease of travel facilitated the diffusion of extremist ideas. And yet, even with these challenges coming from fringe collectives in the Muslim community, most ordinary Muslims maintained

a cosmopolitan outlook. Writing about Malaysia in the 1990s, Ziauddin Sardar perceptively noted:

> as a rapidly developing society Malaysia has gone a lot further, with a lot less brandishing of slogans and rhetoric, to integrate and translate Islamic ideas into the means for meeting the needs and patterns of contemporary life. There are Islamic banks and an Islamic University; one of the most successful developments has been the mutual funds, the Amanah Saham, which no longer cater exclusively to Muslims. Rigid formalism, mysticism, eclecticism and pragmatism: it all makes a very Malaysian mix.[61]

Reformasi *and the Reinvention of Malaysian Islam*

No one anticipated that the most stable and exemplary Muslim country in the world would encounter a deep crisis that pitched Islamizers against each other. The genesis of the crisis was a fallout between two giants, Mahathir and Anwar. Both maintained the conviction that infusing Islam into Malaysian life would propel the country forward. But by 1997, fissures in terms of ideas between the two men were becoming visible. As a would-be prime minister, Anwar proposed more room for *masyarakat madani* (civil society) and deliberative democracy and questioned authoritarianism under the garb of "Asian values." To realize an "Asian Renaissance" (the title of his highly popular and influential book), Asia should draw on its own heritage, a major influence being Islam, to provide an alternative path to progress to that defined by the West. Anwar, however, cautioned that Islamic revivalism "must be properly directed so as not to deteriorate or be corrupted into blind fanaticism which could precipitate into violent clashes with other cultures."[62] Needless to say, he was the new face of Malaysia and had clearly overshadowed Mahathir both local and globally in terms of influence and charisma.

Rapidly losing support from the grassroots, Mahathir, in turn, preferred a more statist approach to actualizing change, especially in a globalized world where budding Islamic countries were so often threatened by external forces, be it in the realm of religion or in other worldly matters. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin described the difference between the two men well by stating: "If Mahathir's camp is interested in the status quo, Anwar's is concerned with changing the status quo."[63] The Asian financial crisis in July 1997 widened the gulf between the two towering figures. They differed profoundly about the steps to be taken to rescue Malaysia from the economic catastrophe, with Mahathir defying the International Monetary Fund (IMF) measures and Anwar calling for compliance. The turning point was on September 3, 1998, when Anwar was fired from

all ministerial positions and from UMNO. By the end of that month, he was brought to court and charged with sodomy. Anwar had undergone too much cataclysm in his youthful years as an Islamic activist to let the charges against him be left unchallenged.[64]

In the same month that saw the beginnings of the sodomy trials, Anwar launched the most massive protest movement in the country's history—the *Reformasi* (Reformation)—that called for the end of Mahathir's rule, the eradication of corruption and cronyism, and the restoration of social justice for all Malaysians. Anwar was replicating the reformasi movement in Indonesia that brought down the long-reigning President Suharto. The dissimilarity between the reformasi movements was that Mahathir as prime minister had his clutches on governmental institutions that his renegade deputy did not. Suharto had lost control over the disgruntled elites and masses, both within and outside his sphere of influence.[65]

The ouster of Anwar and his nine-year prison sentence in April 1999 was an earth-shattering event for Islam in Malaysia. Almost overnight, Malaysia was at the center of attention and scrutiny by globalized Muslims scholars who were increasingly connected in a digital age. Among these scholars was the renowned global mufti, Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian-born intellectual based in Qatar, who issued a fatwa that denounced accusations against Anwar who was reputed for his integrity and moral uprightness. The leader of Nahdatul Ulama, Abdul Rahman Wahid, and other Indonesian students in Cairo defended Anwar and criticized the Malaysia state for their unjust charges against him. In Europe as well as North America, statesmen as well as many human rights organizations made statements in support of Anwar and censured the undue processes by which he was accused and tried in court. They called for Mahathir to respect human rights and the preservation of justice.[66]

Islamic organizations that had previously been co-opted by the state now broke ranks. Granted that Anwar had been part of the ruling regime for more than two decades. In the eyes of his former friends and nemeses, he was the leader and hope of a new wave of Islamization in Malaysia that would break free from the clutches of the control and regulation of the ruling regime. Previous rivals in da'wah, ABIM, JIM, and PAS and former members of UMNO who were loyal to Anwar joined forces against Mahathir's rule. Anwar's turn to anti-state activism brought about a major realignment of the da'wah movement into becoming an anti-state Islamic coalition. Islamic organizations including *Gagasan Demokrasi Rakyat* (GAGASAN, or People's Democratic Scheme), *Gerakan Keadilan Rakyat Malaysia* (GERAK, or Movement of Justice for Malaysians), and *Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial* (ADIL, or Movement for Social Justice) participated actively in a bid to reinvent Islam in Malaysia. The Reformasi in Malaysia had strong Islamic

undertones, and it was used as platform to infuse Islamic messages. For Islamic activists, the Worldwide Web was their armor and artillery to attack the state.[67]

Other political parties and civil society organizations were initially skeptical of Anwar's posturing as a reformist leader. But his chants for change were too strong to ignore and came at the moment when neighboring Indonesia and the Philippines were undergoing major political transformations. *Parti Rakyat Malaysia*, DAP, and PAS joined the newly formed and multi-racial party, *Parti Keadilan Nasional* (later renamed *Parti Keadilan Rakyat*, also known as Keadilan or PKR) led by Anwar's wife, Dr. Wan Azizah. Wan Azizah's meteoric rise to prominence in social justice causes and politics after spending more than a decade as a homemaker made her a symbol of heroinism in Malaysia. She personally identified herself queens and women warriors in Malay history whose valor was a source of strength for everyone seeking to initiate change in Malaysia. "In fact in Malaysia," she remarked in 2002, "the most politicized and politically active group of women has always been the Malay Muslims."[68] The party she led with her daughter, Nurul Izzah, formed an electoral alliance called *Barisan Alternatif* (BA, or Alternative Front). Although formidable in terms of its multi-cultural makeup and grassroots support, the BA was riven with conflicts over the overall leadership of the coalition. More crucially, PAS saw the realization of an Islamic state and continued assertiveness of Islam in politics and other aspects of Malaysian life as indisputable. The Malay-triumphalist Islam that PAS defended so fiercely has been an unremitting cause of breakups in the BA.[69]

All efforts at reinventing Islamization in Malaysia were further stifled by government's use of restraining and revitalization tactics. Key opposition politicians and Islamic activists in support of regime change were arrested prior to the 1999 elections, denying the opposition a forecast victory. The wave of arrests continued well into the new millennium with riot policemen using tear gas to disperse demonstrations all over Malaysia and security forces deployed to detain any persons suspected of belonging to anti-establishment groups. The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and the global battle against terrorism that came in its wake provided the necessary context for incarceration of reformasi activists, journalists, and intellectuals. If anything, as Osman Bakar sharply argues,

> the biggest beneficiary in Malaysia from the political climate created by September 11 and the war on terror is none other than Mahathir himself. . . . Mahathir was able to use these turbulent events to his advantage and bolster his political standing in Malaysia and the rest of the Muslim world. Once this was achieved he was able to leave office from a position of strength.[70]

The state revitalized its tarnished image and legitimacy by reinstating former detainees and by placing some influential politicians into retirement. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, for example, was arrested together with other ABIM and UMNO leaders under the ISA for fighting against corruption, cronyism, and nepotism at the start of the reformasi. He was, however, released a few months later and soon pledged his allegiance to Mahathir Mohamad.[71] Ahmad rose through the UMNO ranks to eventually become a deputy minister in Abdullah Badawi's administration. Seeing the rapid loss of support for his leadership and UMNO, Mahathir stepped down from office in 2003. His successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, regained BN's lost ground by winning 63.9 percent of the popular votes during the 2004 Malaysian general elections. Opposition candidates running with the promise of realizing an Islamic state lost their seats, including the respected PAS leader, Ustaz Abdul Hadi Awang. One reason for this catastrophic defeat was the *Islam Hadhari* (Civilizational Islam) ideology launched by Abdullah.[72]

Part of the appeal of Islam Hadhari for both Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia was its emphasis on good governance, a knowledge-driven and balanced economy, a higher standard of life, protection of the environment, upholding women's and minority rights, the safeguarding of morality and ethics in all spheres, and the security of the common people in Malaysia. Non-Muslim voters saw much of the promises of Islam Hadhari as in line with their vision of a more inclusive Malaysia. Abdullah's credentials as the son of a religious scholar, training in Islamic studies with a well-known record of being a close friend of many non-Muslim businessmen and influential community leaders, added to the charm of Islam Hadhari. His decision to release Anwar Ibrahim from prison in 2004 showed to the Malaysian public that he was moving away from Mahathir's shadow. Yet Abdullah lacked the resolve that his predecessor had in pushing for new programs within the government and in society. He did little to reform the highly Islamized state bureaucracy and the continued promotion of a Malay-triumphalist Islam.[73] IKIM, the *Yayasan Islam Hadhari* (Islam Hadhari Foundation), and the International Institute of Advanced Studies (IAIS) provided the intellectual ballast for Islam Hadhari. But the reach of these think tanks was limited by countervailing forces of Islamization, most notably PAS, which categorically condemned Islam Hadhari as "unislamic" and "a Western agenda to undermine Islam." Other reformasi-linked organizations, parties, civil society groups, media channels, and influential personalities caricatured Abdullah's new slogan and state ideology as empty rhetoric, a claim that the government combatted through a slew of publications.[74]

Merely a year after the elections, Islam Hadhari began to unravel as state bodies took action against deviant groups, beginning with the followers of

the Sky Kingdom in Terengganu. Inspired by Sufism and believing that their leader, Ayah Pin, was a reincarnation of the founders of several world religions, the group renounced Islam as soon as religious authorities denounced them as heretical. In July 2015, their places of worship were destroyed. Ayah Pin, his wives, and more than fifty followers were arrested and charged for heresy.[75] The religious bureaucracy's successive banning of books relating to Islam, the prohibition against Christians using the word "Allah" in their religious publications, the restrictions placed by the shari'a courts upon Muslims wanting to convert to other religions (including the highly-publicized Lina Joy apostasy case in 2007), and the mass demonstrations of Hindus against the destruction of their temples (also known as the 2007 HINDRAF [Hindu Rights Action Force] Rally) further blemished Abdullah's state ideology of civilizational Islam.

When UMNO Youth leader Hishamuddin Tun Hussein flaunted the keris as a signifier of Malay supremacy in the country and received a roaring cheer by the audience during a UMNO Assembly meeting in November 2007, the ideals of Islam Hadhari had fallen by the wayside. Abdullah's Islam Hadhari made him popular in the Muslim world at a time when Muslim countries were looking for a philosophy of hope in the midst of a surging global Islamophobia. Locally, however, his bright star briskly faded as the public caricatured his physical lethargy both in parliament and in public. Other than the nickname "Pak Lah," Abdullah was often called the "sleeping prime minister." Carl Ernst sums up Abdullah's unfulfilled dreams well: "In any case, Islam Hadhari, despite its remarkably broad claims, remains very much a child of the particular political experience of Malaysia. And the gap between its rhetoric and its political context is undoubtedly what makes people smile."[76]

Mahathir's biting public attacks undermined Abdullah's leadership further. Abdullah tried to regain ground among Muslims by bringing in popular speakers and Islamic preachers of different Islamic persuasions into the UMNO fold. Dr. Mashitah Ibrahim and Fathul Bari were two examples; the former represented the mainstream version of Shafi'ite-oriented Sunni Islam, while the latter belonged to an increasingly popular Salafi movement. Even so, BN lost their two-thirds majority in parliament during the 2008 elections. Abdullah resigned as prime minister a year later to give way to Najib Tun Razak. It was period of awakening for all Malaysians as popular support for the BN was progressively weakening. Anwar was the unifying force that brought Muslims and non-Muslims and opposition parties together in a mass rally called Bersih that questioned the government's handling of the elections. Forty thousand people attended the gathering, wearing yellow shirts as their symbol of protest. The leaders of PAS toned down its aggressive stance on hudud and the Islamic laws,



FIGURE 8.1 Bersih 4.0 Rally at Pasar Seni, Kuala Lumpur

and for the first time ever the party fielded a non-Muslim candidate, R. Kumutha Raman. It was a strategy that bagged PAS seventeen more seats .[77]

Islamization in Flux

Najib was sworn in as prime minister with a deluge of forces working against his government. Malaysia in 2009 was already suffused with Islam, with all sorts of Islamic labels and brands used for policy purposes. The halalization drive was at its peak, and the country was the leading destination for Muslim tourists from all over the Muslim world.[78] Although a scion of Malaysia's second prime minister, Tun Razak, Najib's personal Islamic credentials were already hanging in the balance as rumors about his complicity in the murder of a Mongolian model, Altantunya Shaariibuu, flooded news headlines.[79] Najib therefore left Badawi's Islam Hadhari to found a state ideology called "1Malaysia," which promoted national unity, ethnic harmony, and efficient governance. Many of the ideals and later activities associated with 1Malaysia overlapped with Islam Hadhari. By removing the word Islam and by distancing himself from Islamic countries such as Iran, Najib hoped to capture non-Muslim support locally and gain favors from global superpowers, the United States being uppermost on his list. On all

counts, Najib's leadership placed Malaysian Islam in a state of flux. 1Malaysia did not lead to a more inclusive Islamic bureaucracy—more restrictions were placed on local preachers who were anti-establishment or promoting versions of Islam that were not in line with state-defined religiosity. The seizure of thousands of Malay-language bibles in Sarawak and the soft approach taken by the government toward inflammatory statements made by right-wing and supremacist Malay and Islamic groups such as PERKASA (*Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa*, or Organization of Empowered Indigenous Peoples) and *Pertubuhan Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah Malaysia* (ASWAJA, or Malaysia Organization of the People of Sunnah and the Community) made Najib an object of denunciation even by members of his own party.[80]

Doubts cast over Najib's leadership were met by the coming into prominence of new Muslim collectives that influenced Muslim thought. The reformist Salafis were among these up-and-coming groups. They maintained a guarded distance from party politics and concentrated their energies on urging Muslims to think critically about matters pertaining to faith, social justice, the rights of non-Muslims and minorities, corruption, and political mismanagement as well as the problems of inequality in Malaysia. Their lectures and publications were well publicized in the digital world and the printed media. Some of these reformist Salafis banded together to form the *Pertubuhan Ilmuwan Malaysia* (Association of Malaysian Scholars). Most articulate and arguably the most controversial was Dr. Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin, more popularly known as Maza. A graduate of Islamic studies from universities in Jordan and Malaysia, Maza promoted the conception of *minda tajdid* (renewal-oriented minds) among Muslims. By this he meant a style of thought that questioned the commonly held assumptions, practices, and habits of Muslims, bringing them closer to the spirit of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and contemporary advances in religious as well as secular knowledge. Maza's call for reform and his meteoric rise to popularity mirrored that of a famous Malay-Indonesian scholar, Hamka, whom he personally admired. Both wanted Muslims to break free from the shackles of traditionalism, conservatism, jingoism, and unquestioning respect for authority. Both were courageous in highlighting the moral and religious failings of political leaders. Both were arrested for their unyielding stance regarding the freedom of all Muslims to speak their minds. Maza was and is still banned from speaking in many states in Malaysia. On a few occasions, he was arrested by JAIS for teaching Islam without a valid license, a charge that was thrown out by court judges who described such arrests as sloppy and lacking necessary justifications. The continued barring of Maza and the reformist Salafis has won them an even greater following from ordinary Muslims, including royalty in a few states. Appointed twice as the Mufti

of Perlis, Maza now wields a formidable team who are intellectually driven and socially engaged.[81]

Acquiring just as much traction in the public eye were the Muslim democrats. They were members of civil society organizations, faculty staff at universities, and cadres of political parties who yearned for a Malaysia that was non-communal, democratic, and open to the universal values of Islam. The Muslim democrats saw the secular state not as an entity to be totally dispensed with but as a neutral intermediary between religious and other groups in society and the government. Muslim democrats therefore commenced a movement past the rhetoric of the "Islamic state," questioning the relevance of triumphalist Islamization, and urged their co-religionists to accept any political systems as long as the maxims of Islam were not contravened by such systems. Among the well-known Muslim democrats from political parties are Mat Sabu, Husam Musa, Dr. Dzulkefly Ahmad, Khalid Samad, Mahfuz Omar, and Dr. Hatta Ramli, all of whom were PAS members before they formed the *Parti Amanah Negara* (National Trust Party) in 2015. Dr. Maszlee Malik (IIUM lecturer, currently the minister of education), Wan Saiful Wan (chief executive of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs, or IDEAS), and Dr. Ahmad Farouk Musa (founder and director of Islamic Renaissance Front, or IRF) provided the intellectual stimulus and invigorated scholarly debates over the possibilities of realizing a plural and democratic Malaysia. Ahmad summed up the general line of thinking of Muslim democrats well when he wrote the following:

> Accepting a secular state will allow Muslims not only to follow Islam in the way they genuinely believe but also to eliminate the endless discussions over the ideal "Islamic state" and its system like "Islamic economy" or even the disputable hudud laws. We should instead focus on the fundamentals of a civil state such as justice, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, good governance, separation of power, rule of law, respect for human rights and economic equality.[82]

Other da'wah organizations underwent a process of regeneration during this period, mostly toward more openness and active engagement with non-Muslims. In October 2009, JIM formed a coalition with other organizations such as Musleh, Medical Interest Group (MIG), Aqsa Syarif, and *Majlis Syura Muslimun* (MSM, Muslim Consensus Committee) to form *Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia* (IKRAM). IKRAM organized seminars and academic workshops and ran schools as well as welfare organizations to promote the creation of a new and shari'a-compliant Malaysia.[83] As for ABIM, being part of the reformasi and an ardent supporter of the PKR transformed the organization into a politically oriented body and less

of a youth-centered movement than it had been for many decades. This shift had much to do with entry of many first- and second-generation members of ABIM, who also were part of ABIM's advisory group, WADAH (*Wadah Pencerdasan Umat* or Platform for the Intellectualization of the Ummah), into opposition politics. The main task for ABIM and all its local and international branches was to work toward a total change in the political and religious climate of the country. From there, all other reforms could be realized.[84] Other Muslim organizations that joined in the da'wah efforts and reached out to poor Malaysians from all ethnic groups while not delving into politics were the Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA) and the Malaysian Indian Muslim Youth Movement (GEPIMA).

Viewed from another angle, a fresh wave of shari'atization garbed in ethnonationalist rhetoric was noticeable during this time as civil society activists and politicians sought to boost their image among the Malay-Muslim masses. In July 1997, a group of Malay-Muslim graduates formed a new dakwah movement, ISMA (*Ikatan Siswazah Muslim* Malaysia, or Solidarity of Malaysian Muslim Graduates). ISMA grew slowly through the years and experienced a surge in membership from 2005 onward as it restructured its movement to becoming more embracing of all Muslims regardless of educational background. It sought to revive public consciousness about the Malay-Islamic civilization through education. ISMA was a staunch defender Malay-Muslim rights to establish and helm an Islamic state. The group attacked the incursion of godless liberalism in Malaysia and Shi'ite and Christian missionizing and rebuked non–Malays (including Muslims) when they commented on issues pertaining to Malay Muslims.[85] The further expansion of the powers of the shari'a courts in most states in Malaysia then inevitably caused much alarm among many non-Muslims. Alarmist analysts and sensational news features have magnified their fears even more than before.[86]

Shari'atization brought about fierce public battles between right-wing Islamic activists and liberal Muslim movements such as SIS. SIS was against the imposition of Islamic norms in the private lives of Malaysians. They questioned the unregulated practice of polygamy, marital violence, and child marriages. For them, moral policing "results not in a more moral society but a mass of terrified, submissive and hypocritical subjects."[87] They reasoned that although the shari'a should be upheld and respected, it must not be used an instrument of the state to regulate the daily piety of Muslims and to marginalize apostates. The implementation of the shari'a must take into account the protection of other faiths and the rights of women, Muslim or non-Muslim, to live as equal citizens in the country.[88]

Above and beyond the challenge of shari'atization, Muslim and non-Muslim activists banded together to demand political change in Malaysia. They attended the Bersih 2.0 and 3.0 rallies on July 9, 2011, and April 28, 2012, respectively (See

Figure 8.1). These episodic coalitions were clear indications that amidst demands for more Islam in state and society, Islamic activists would readily join hands with other Muslims and non-Muslims for fair elections, for the cause of social justice, and for a Malaysia free from corruption. Indeed, the Bersih rallies and its international arm, Global Bersih, unified Malaysians from all religions and backgrounds.[89] The cumulative effect of Muslims and non-Muslims unifying to form a formidable challenge against the government was evinced in the 2013 general elections. The *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR), consisting of PKR, DAP, and PAS, won 50.87 percent of the popular vote at the national level. BN won 133 out of 222 seats in Parliament and stayed in power, however, which was a letdown for most Malaysians who hoped for a change in government.[90]

Yet the elections showed that the incumbent's reputation had severely waned and all that was needed were tipping points to put an end to BN's hold on Malaysian politics. A number of successive controversies placed BN at the edge of the cliff. The first was Anwar Ibrahim's conviction and five-year imprisonment again for sodomy, despite being acquitted by the prosecution three years earlier. As the case dragged on since 2008, ordinary Malaysians wondered whether the already health-stricken Anwar had actually committed the crime or if the charges against him were part of a political conspiracy. Doubts cast over the independence of the judiciary in light of Anwar's case further added to a loss of public confidence in the government.[91]

To this must be added the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal. On July 2, 2015, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that $700 million was deposited into the prime minister's personal account—he was also the chairman of 1MDB. While investigations by Swiss and US legal authorities were underway, news agencies publicized the lavish lifestyle of Najib's wife, Rosmah, and his children. The rising cost of living in Malaysia and huge projects given to foreign companies added to the people's rage toward the government. Leading up to Malaysia's 14th general elections, Najib tightened his control on all governmental institutions, and fired key UMNO members who urged him to step down. Najib had repealed the ISA in 2012 in an attempt to show to the public that he was different from past ministers in handling political dissent, but in place of the ISA, the Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA) widened state powers to arrest anyone perceived as a threat. The conditions were set for a major battle with Najib's former friends and long-time nemeses for his leadership.[92]

The moment of truth came when Mahathir expressed his indignation against Najib's government followed by his resignation from UMNO. Muhyiddin Yassin, Shafie Apdal, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, and Sanusi Junid and other top UMNO leaders who had been fired from their party and state offices joined Mahathir in castigating Najib. The police interrogated them all. Undeterred,

Mahathir formed a new party, the *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (PPBM, or Malaysian United Indigenous Party), vowing to stand against UMNO during the elections. By September 22, 2015, past enemies had become friends when a new opposition coalition, the *Pakatan Harapan* (PH, or Alliance of Hope), was established. The PH consisted of the PKR, DAP, Parti Amanah Negara, PPBM, and *Parti Warisan Sabah* (WARISAN, or Sabah Heritage Party) led by Mahathir Mohamad. PAS stood alone during the 2018 elections. PPBM was provisionally dissolved by the Registrar of Societies (ROS) a month before the elections for having failed to produce necessary documents but was later on reinstated by the Malaysian High Court. Mahathir led the PH in what has been dubbed the most iconic general election in Malaysian history. On May 9, 2018, PH won 121 out of the 221 seats in parliament. The very people who once constituted the party and ran the government had broken BN's sixty-one-year rule.[93] Released from prison soon after, Anwar Ibrahim won the by-elections at Port Dickson with a resounding mandate of 71.3 percent of the vote and was sworn into parliament, named the prime minister-in-waiting. During a speech at an event organized by ABIM, Anwar called upon Malay Muslims to master other languages, particularly the Chinese and English languages, in order to bring back the humanitarian aspects of development and deepen the pluralistic heritage of Malaysians.[94]

CODA

Whether PH's ascent to power marks a landmark shift in the history of Islamization of Malaysia remains to be seen. Historians are particularly bad at predicting the future, and I am certainly not gifted with the power of foresight. What I have sought to do in this book is to encourage Malaysians, and perhaps other students of Islamic history as well, to look back, deep into their own pasts, into the biography of their motherland. For over a millennium, different forces of society—states, societies, Muslims, non-Muslims, scholars, and laymen—both at the local and the global levels, have contributed to the making of Islam in Malaysia. The waves of Islamization that shaped Malaysia, like elsewhere in the world, were all made possible by the work of Islam's proponents and critics, its purveyors and recipients, insiders and outsiders, engendering a civilization that was at once diverse, interactive, and cosmopolitan. Indeed, in looking at the venture of Islam in Malaysia, this book poses a challenge to scholars to rethink our inherited approaches to historical Islam. Islam in Malaysia, as I have shown, has always been entwined. And it is through the lenses of "entwined history" that we should now view the shifting fates of Muslims, in our quest to uncover how a global faith has endured and lived alongside other ways of life for generations in the farthest reaches of the world.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 3

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CHAPTER 4

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CHAPTER 5

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CHAPTER 6

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